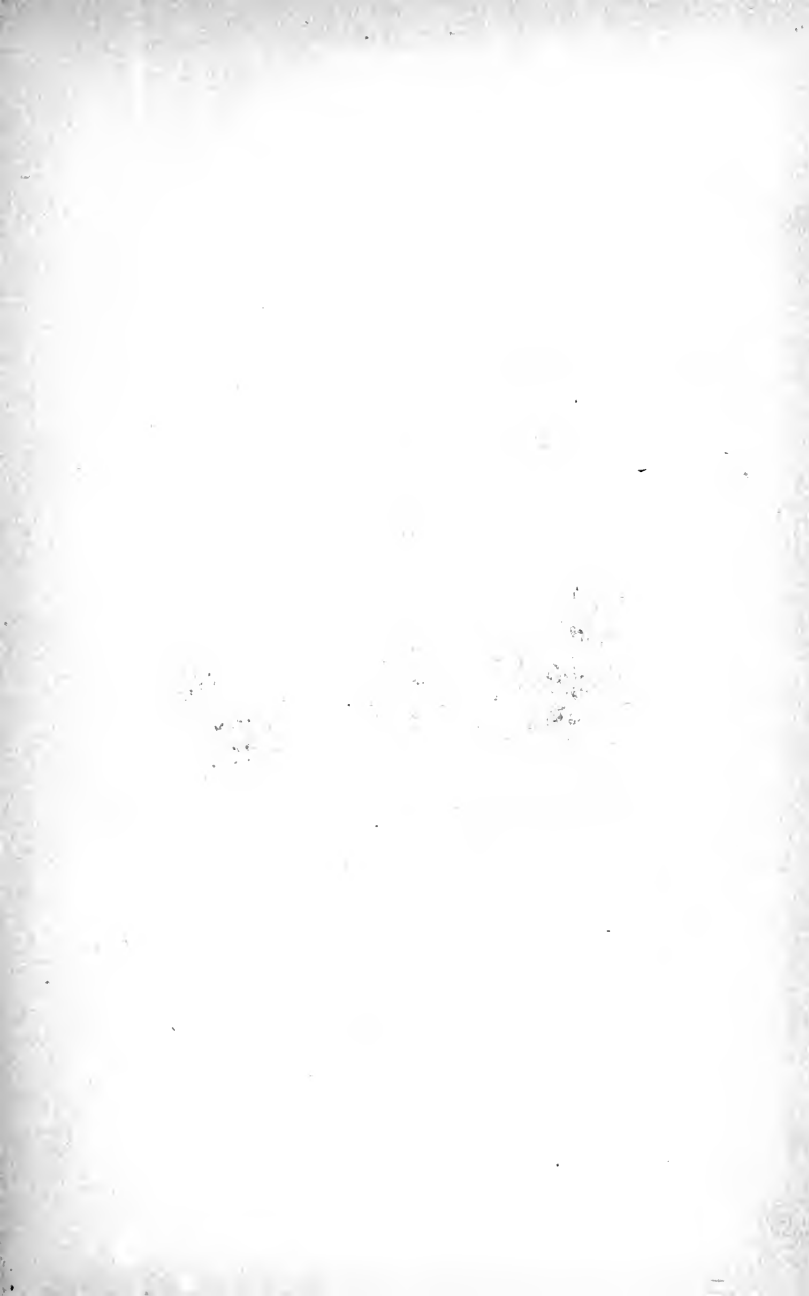
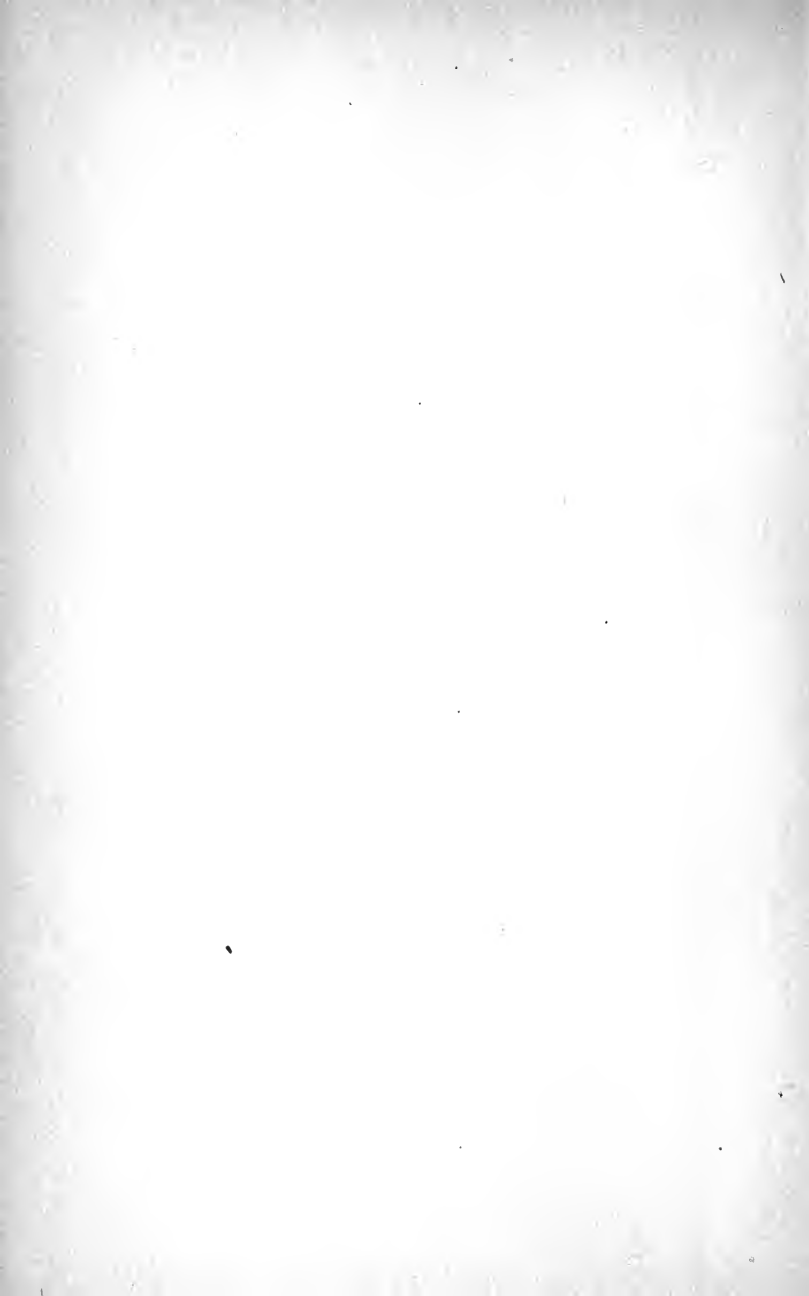


JUN 12 1906







Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

BY

BORDEN P. BOWNE

*Professor of Philosophy in
Boston University*



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge

BT124

B6

MOFFITT

**COPYRIGHT 1905 BY BORDEN P. BOWNE
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

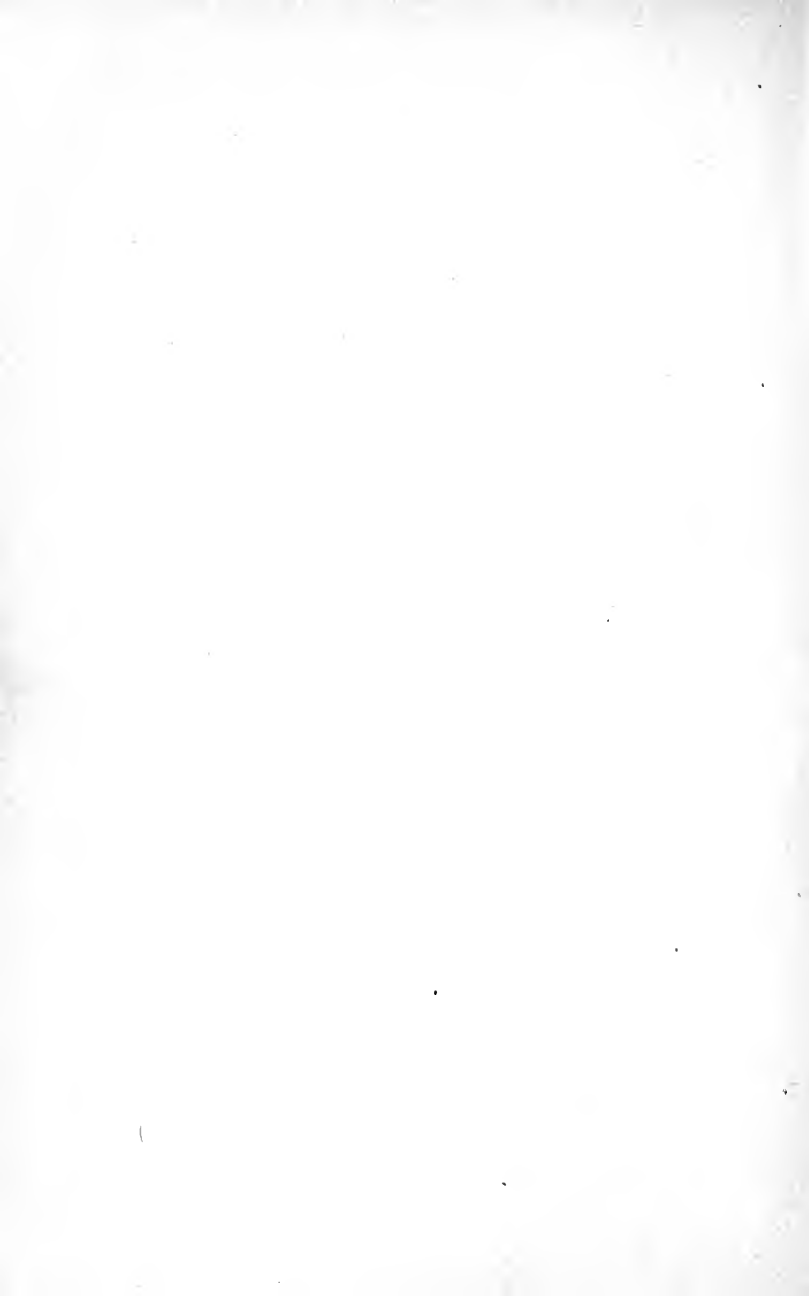
Published October, 1905

THIRD IMPRESSION

PREFACE

THE undivineness of the natural and the unnaturalness of the divine is the great heresy of popular thought respecting religion. The error roots in a deistic and mechanical philosophy, and in turn produces a large part of the misunderstandings that haunt religious and irreligious thought alike. To assist in the banishment of this error by showing a more excellent way is the aim of this little book.

BORDEN P. BOWNE.



CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	I
I. GOD AND NATURE	5
II. GOD AND HISTORY	33
III. GOD AND THE BIBLE	66
IV. GOD AND RELIGION	116

THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

THE progress of thought is slow, but there is progress nevertheless. In every field of life men have had painfully to find their way. In religion man has always had some sense, more or less dim, of an alliance with the unseen and the eternal, but it has taken ages to organize and clarify it and bring it to clear apprehension and rational expression. As men begin on the plane of the senses, this unseen existence has been mainly conceived in sense terms, and hence has always been exposed to destructive criticism from the side of philosophy. The crude anthropomorphism of early thought invited and compelled the criticism. Again, this vague sense of the unseen has always been confronted by

2 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

the apparent realities and finalities of the outer world ; and in comparison with them it has often seemed unreal and fictitious. Matter we know and things we know ; but God and spirit, what and where are they? When thus skeptically accosted by the senses, they sometimes fade away. Hence religious faith has always had a double difficulty to combat, arising from its alliance with sense forms, on the one hand, and from sense dogmatism, on the other. The alliance was perpetually plunging religion into destructive anthropomorphism ; and the sense dogmatism led to a frequent rejection of religion as baseless, because spiritual realities lie beyond seeing and hearing. But we are slowly outgrowing this. Religious thought is gradually casting off its coarse anthropomorphism ; and philosophic criticism is fast discrediting the shallow dogmatism of sense thinking, with its implication of mechanical and materialistic naturalism.

Thus religious thought is progressing ; and the result to which all lines of reflection are fast converging is the ancient word of inspiration, that in God we live and move and have our being. This is at once the clear indication of thought and the assured conviction of faith. In this conclusion, moreover, both religion and philosophy find their only sure foundation.

This doctrine we call the divine immanence ; by which we mean that God is the omnipresent ground of all finite existence and activity. The world, alike of things and of spirits, is nothing existing and acting on its own account, while God is away in some extra-sidereal region, but it continually depends upon and is ever upheld by the ever-living, ever-present, ever-working God.

This divine immanence has important bearings on both speculative and religious problems, and contains the solution of many traditional difficulties. To trace

4 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

this doctrine into its implications is the aim of the discussion. The thought will centre on four leading points, — God and Nature, God and History, God and the Bible, and God and Religion. On each of these points naturalistic and deistic dogmatism has long wrought confusion and mischief.

I

GOD AND NATURE

THERE is a scholastic maxim that truth emerges sooner from error than from confusion. Allied to this is Goethe's remark, that the gods themselves can do nothing with stupidity. One is often reminded of both of these truths in reading popular discussions of the supernatural, whether from the religious or the irreligious standpoint. Their most prominent feature is confusion. Out of such a state of things nothing but babble and Babel can result. Our first duty in this matter is to clear up our thought so as to know what we really mean and desire.

And first we must find out what we mean by nature. A great deal of bad metaphysics is commonly concealed under this term, and it is the unsuspected source of many of our woes. What, then, is nature?

6 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

Popular thought is based on a crude sense realism. There is a system of material things, it holds, about us in space and producing a great variety of changes in time. The immediate agent in the case is matter, which by its inherent forces and laws initiates and maintains the cosmic processes and produces their manifold results. This system of things and laws we call nature ; and all events arising in this system and in accordance with its laws we call natural.

This view seems to be an undeniable fact of experience. Things and their forces are manifestly there, and nothing else is in sight. Whatever else may be doubtful, there can be no question about the reality and activity of nature. God and spirit are hypotheses, but matter is a solid and substantial fact.

This type of thought has always had a strong tendency to atheism. Nature is made into a self-running system, at least for the present. Within the system all

things seem to be accounted for by the system ; and as the beginning disappears in the infinite past, and horizons vanish in infinite space, the thought is not far away that perhaps nature has always been there in self-equality and self-sufficiency. Thus "Nature" in such a scheme is always on the point of setting up for itself. In any case, a division of labor is made between the work of God and that of nature. Whatever can be referred to nature is supposed to be sufficiently explained without further reference. If there be any mind at all in connection with nature, it is needed only to explain the outstanding facts which are not yet accounted for by the natural order. Thus God is at best only a provisional hypothesis, and becomes less and less necessary the more the reign of natural law is extended. Atheism is the limit of this way of thinking. As Comte once said, science will finally conduct God to the frontier, and bow him out with thanks for

8 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

his provisional services. When law becomes all-embracing, God will be a needless hypothesis. How general this way of thinking has been is familiar to all who are acquainted with the naturalistic literature of the last generation.

Our present discussion is not with the atheist, but with the theist, who too often holds the same conception of nature as the atheist. He is openly or tacitly afraid of nature, and naturalism is with him a term of dislike or reproach. He is suspicious of the reign of law, and is quite depressed when some outstanding irregularity is at last reduced to order. He looks rather anxiously for breaks in the natural order, insists especially on the things that "science cannot explain," and carefully treasures reports of miracles as things without which religion would vanish, but with which we may hope to put to flight all the armies of the aliens. And it must be admitted that his-

torically there has been much to excuse, if not to justify, this attitude. Naturalism often has been an atheistic doctrine. Nature and mind have been set up in mutual exclusion ; and the theist with a shallow sense philosophy has seen no relief but in decrying naturalism and natural law and "science falsely so called," and insisting on breaks and miracles and things "science cannot explain." Matter might possibly explain the solar system and even all inorganic processes and products, but it could not explain life, it was said, with the tacit admission, which sometimes became explicit, that spontaneous generation, if it should be established, would be the final overthrow of theism. Meanwhile, neither theist nor atheist suspected that perhaps matter cannot explain anything whatever, and as an ontological fact does not even exist.

For the sake of the "natural realist," to whom this will seem manifest error,

10 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

if not raving, a word must be interpolated here respecting the phenomenality and non-substantiality of the apparent world. Let us begin by admitting the most realistic doctrine of things. This table on which I am writing is of course real, that is, it is no dream or illusion. But when we begin to reflect upon the nature of its reality, puzzles soon emerge. The physicist tell us of molecules and atoms which compose the table, and when we ask concerning them, we hear of vortex rings and centres of force and various other mysteries. When these questions are thought out, we see that the things about us are only phenomenal, and that the true causality is behind them. Thus physics itself speedily leads us away from the common-sense notion of substantial things about us with various inherent forces which do the work of the world, and brings us to the conception of one supreme causality behind phenomena, on

which they all depend and from which they all proceed. From this point of view, the theist need not be in the least disturbed if so-called spontaneous generation were established as a fact ; for it would only show that the supreme cause has more than one way of working. Theism is concerned with causality, not with method.

But apart from this metaphysical suggestion, the theist's horror of naturalism is logically inconsequent in any case. It rests on the tacit fancy that nature is a blind mechanical system which does a great many unintended things on its own account. These represent no plan or purpose of any kind, but are just blind happenings for which nature alone is responsible. Whatever comes about in accordance with the natural order expresses no purpose ; it is simply natural. For purpose we must have "interpositions," "interferences," "special providences," and that sort of thing. Wherever law

12 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

can be traced we are forbidden to think of any purposive interpretation, whether in the individual life or in the larger field of history.

How shallow this is, is plain upon inspection. If nature be dependent on intelligence for its origin, it is equally dependent on intelligence for all its implications. Mechanism of itself can never make any new departures, or reach anything not implied in it from the beginning. If, then, we suppose that God created a system of nature which was intended to unfold according to inherent laws, we must say that the creative act implied and carried with it to the minutest details all that should ever arrive in the unfolding of the system. There is no way by which things or events could slip in which were not provided for in the primal arrangement. And if we suppose the Creator to have known what he was doing, we must suppose him to have intended the implications. But this is all

that theism cares to assert. If an event represents a divine purpose, or is part of a divine plan, it is as truly purposeful when realized through natural processes as it would be if produced by fiat. But we miss the reality of the purpose from the fancy that the natural system can do a lot of things to which it was not determined by the creative act, and which therefore are mere mechanical occurrences without any further significance. And when we allow the purpose, we practically cancel it by overlooking the relativity of our temporal judgments and placing the purpose so far away in time that we think it must have faded out of the divine thought and interest altogether. The things we planned years ago we have forgotten or they have lost all value for us, and we suppose it must be so with God. Of a faithful purpose moving across the ages and forever keeping tryst with foreseen need, we have no conception.

14 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

But this is superficial to the last degree. Long and short are relative terms at best, and have no significance for the Eternal. Metaphysics, too, adds its suggestion, which nullifies all these traditional intimidations drawn from the measureless age of the world, that time itself is only a relation in self-consciousness and has no such meaning for the Infinite as it has for us. In that case, time is merely the shadow of our finitude and not a supreme law of all existence. We need not, then, give up the belief in purpose because of law, or because of the age of things. To be sure, we are often unable to discern any special significance in events ; but that only means that the underlying purpose is not always evident. But that the event is natural, in the sense of occurring in an order of law, is absolutely unrelated to the question of purpose ; and this is the only question of importance for the theist.

The theist, then, is guilty of bad logic

when he makes the order of law a reason for denying purpose. The way in which events occur in an order of law is one thing; the meaning of such events in a scheme of purpose is forever another. Hence we might maintain the naturalness of all events, in the sense defined, and at the same time might include all events in a purposive interpretation. Man's control of nature is realized through mechanical processes in accordance with natural law, but it is informed with purpose, nevertheless. If some lunar scientist, well versed in physics and chemistry but ignorant of human personality, should visit our planet, he could rule out human purpose in nature with the same logic with which we rule out divine purpose. The same fact of law applies to both, and is equally compatible or incompatible with both. This false antithesis of law and purpose is one of the great superficialities of popular thought, and rests upon an untenable philosophy.

16 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

But both theists and atheists are alike guilty of bad metaphysics when they erect the system of nature into an ontological reality in any case. The progress of philosophical criticism has shown nature in this sense to be only an idol of the dogmatic den. There is no substantial or ontological nature, but only natural events; and a natural event is one which occurs in an order of law, or one which we can connect with other events according to rule. But this order has no causality in it. In the causal sense it explains nothing, being really only a rule according to which some power beyond it proceeds. Respecting the natural order two quite distinct questions may be asked. These concern, first, the uniformities of coexistence and sequence which constitute the order; and, second, the underlying causality and purpose of the order. Things exist and events happen in certain ways. To discover, describe, and register these ways of being and

happening is the function of science. But when this is done, we further need to form some conception of the causality at work, and of the purpose which may underlie the whole. This is the field of philosophy. These two questions, as said, are quite distinct, and the answer to both is necessary to the full satisfaction of the mind. As a result of this distinction, which is fast making its way in the higher speculative circles, the antithesis of natural and supernatural is taking on another form, and one from which many scandals that infest the traditional view disappear.

In the new conception the supernatural is nothing foreign to nature and making occasional raids into nature in order to reveal itself, but, so far as nature as a whole is concerned, the supernatural is the ever-present ground and administrator of nature; and nature is simply the form under which the Supreme Reason and Will manifest themselves. This is the

18 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

doctrine of the divine immanence to which philosophy is coming in its search after the cosmic causality. We come down, not to a world of lumps, nor to any impersonal principle, but to a Living Will which worketh hitherto, and which worketh forevermore. And nature being but the fixed form of the divine causality, we must say that events in general are at once natural in the mode of their occurrence, in that they come about according to rule, and supernatural in their causation, in that they all alike abut on that Living Will by which all things stand and from which they forever proceed. The commonest event, say the fall of a leaf, is as supernatural in its causation as any miracle would be ; for in both alike God would be equally implicated.

Yes so!

This division of labor between science and philosophy has brought about a better understanding than formerly existed. Both parties are seen to have important

interests to guard, and each party has inalienable rights in its own field. They can collide only through confusion. Science as such explains nothing, for it only classifies and coördinates facts according to rule; and philosophy as such is empty until experience furnishes the facts. When, then, we are told that science must never have recourse to supernatural explanations, on the one hand, or that "science cannot explain" this, that, or the other thing, on the other, we know that confusion lieth at the door, and that a distinction is in order. In the scientific sense, explanation consists in exhibiting the fact as a case or implication of an empirically discovered rule; and in this sense we must never have recourse to supernatural explanations. If the fact cannot be reduced to rule of any sort, science can only let it alone and wait for light. But in the causal sense science explains nothing. Here the alternative is supernatural explanation or none. Meta-

20 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

physics shows that mechanical explanation must lose itself in barren tautologies and the infinite regress, and must even disperse existence itself into nothingness through the infinite divisibility of space and time. But these two types of explanation, the scientific and the causal, in no way conflict. If we admit that things hang together in certain ways, the causality and purpose are not revealed thereby ; and if we affirm a supernatural causality, the form and contents of its working remain an open question.

The failure to make this distinction is well illustrated by a recent discussion in the London "Times." Lord Kelvin, who is well known as one of the greatest leaders of physical science, said, in a letter to the "Times:" "Scientific thought is compelled to accept the idea of Creative Power. Forty years ago, I asked Liebig, walking somewhere in the country, if he believed that the grass and the flowers which he saw around us grew

by mere chemical forces. He answered, 'No, no more than I could believe that the books of botany describing them could grow by mere chemical forces.' Every action of human free will is a miracle to physical and chemical and mathematical science."

This letter called out considerable correspondence and comment. Lord Kelvin himself seemed to think that "mere chemical forces" would explain much, but were not equal to the explanation of life. This laid him open to obvious reply. If "mere" natural forces could do so much, who can tell where the "mereness" becomes inadequate? But neither Lord Kelvin nor his critics, some of whom were inclined to view his utterance as an outbreak of Scotch orthodoxy, had any clear idea of what they meant by explanation, and hence came to no conclusion. If by explanation we mean a view which will enable the mind to interpret the facts in all their aspects, Lord

22 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

Kelvin was right ; but if by explanation we mean simply a classification of the facts under empirical rules, his critics were right. For such explanation the idea of God is as little needed in science as it is in shoemaking, and is equally irrelevant in both ; but at the same time, such explanation remains on the surface and does not touch the deeper questions of thought at all.

The same is true of explanations by evolution, natural selection, etc. They simply describe an order for which they do not account, and hence, so far as any real insight is concerned, we get no help from them. For real insight we need to know what the power is which is at work, why it works as it does, why the arrivals and survivals are such that their net result is to produce an orderly and progressive system ; and to these inquiries mechanical naturalism has no answer. The distinction between evolution as a description of method and

evolution as a doctrine of causality has reduced this doctrine to a very subordinate significance, and has deprived it entirely of all those fearsome implications which it had for superficial thought. As a mode of procedure, it is as good as any other ; as a doctrine of mechanical causality and progress, it is altogether impossible.

We cannot, then, too carefully distinguish between the description and formulation which science gives and the causal and purposive interpretation for which philosophy seeks. The notion that science is gradually enabling us to dispense with God is superficial almost to illiteracy ; and the opposite notion that would confuse scientific descriptions, classifications, and formulations by irrelevant theistic suggestions is equally so. Imagine a theologian who should interrupt a geographer in his surveys and measurements to ask what geography says about God ; and then imagine a

24 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

geographer who, because God is not needed in surveying and map-making, should conclude that God is a "needless hypothesis." Each would be worthy of the other. According to Mrs. Carlyle, "the mixing of things is the great bad ;" and there certainly never was a greater "bad," in its way, than the "mixing" of the question of scientific description and formulation with that of philosophic interpretation, the sure result being a "conflict of science and religion," or some other unprofitable aberration.

The instructed theist, then, sets aside the self-running nature and the absentee God. For him there is no nature which does at least the bulk of the world's work, while God is reserved for interpositions. For him God is the ever-present agent in the on-going of the world, and nature is but the form and product of his ceaseless activity. The theist, therefore, is not afraid of naturalism ; for the

naturalism of atheistic thought he knows to be an illusion, while naturalism in theistic thought is merely the search for God's familiar and orderly methods in all his works. The theist knows that he is in God's world, and that the ultimate reason why anything is, or changes, or comes to pass, must be sought not in any mechanical necessity, nor in any natural antecedents, nor in any impersonal agency of any kind, but in the will and purpose of that God in whom all things live and move and have their being. Every system of whatever sort must come down at last to some fact, or system of facts, of which no more can be said than that it is. This fact, to which all else is referred, and from which all else takes its rise, is, for theism, the will and purpose of the Eternal.

At the same time the instructed theist recognizes that the divine causality proceeds in orderly ways, so that events do not happen at random but according to

26 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

rule. To discover the modes of being and happening is the function of inductive science ; and practical wisdom depends on this knowledge. When we know how things hang together in the order of law, we can adjust ourselves thereto, and to a very considerable extent can subordinate nature to our purposes. In the fact and knowledge of this system of law we have the condition of science and practical living. In the insight that this system is no self-sufficient fact, but simply the form of a divine causality, we have the supreme condition of religion.

Thus we have to correct the false conception of nature and the natural which underlies popular thought. Nature is supposed, for the present at least, to run itself, and is set up as a rival of God ; so that God is needed only to explain the outstanding facts which as yet have found no natural explanation. With this conception naturalism could not fail to

be looked upon as hostile to religion, and it became a synonym for infidelity. And there was a great deal of naturalism of this sort, which promised to dispense with God altogether after a while. This was "bald naturalism," and it was met by an equally "bald" supernaturalism, a thing of portents, prodigies, and interpositions, spooking about among the laws of nature, breaking one now and then, but having no vital connection with the orderly movement of the world.

Both views were bald, and they were especially bald inside. A better metaphysics, however, enables us to set aside with all conviction both sorts of baldness. The cosmic order is no rival of God, but is simply the continuous manifestation and product of the divine activity. There is no longer any reason for being afraid of naturalism, for naturalism is now merely a tracing of the order in which the divine causality proceeds. It is description, not explanation. It classifies

28 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

events under familiar heads, but for the causal explanation and purpose of all events we must fall back on God ; and that not on a God that was, but on a God that is, and whose activity did not cease with the end of creation's week, but continues forevermore.

We are, then, in God's world, and all things continuously depend on him. We have not to attempt an impossible division between God's work and that of nature, for there is no such division ; we have rather to study the method and contents of God's work which we call nature, and in which God is forever immanent. Thus the naturalistic and deistic banishment of God from the real world is recalled, and the doctrine of the divine immanence is put in its place ; yet not an immanence of disorder and arbitrariness, but an immanence of goodness and wisdom and law.

This general conception of the divine

immanence has only imperfectly passed from philosophical thought into theological and religious thinking. It has, however, important religious bearings which need to be pointed out; for too often we mistake our sense dogmatism for science, and our misunderstandings for religion.

In a recent number of the "Sunday-School Times" a story is told of an Eastern king which illustrates at once our delusion respecting natural processes, and also God's work and presence in them. The king was seated in a garden, and one of his counselors was speaking of the wonderful works of God. "Show me a sign," said the king, "and I will believe." "Here are four acorns," said the counselor; "will your majesty plant them in the ground, and then stoop down for a moment and look into this clear pool of water?" The king did so. "Now," said the other, "look up." The king looked up and saw four oak-trees where he had planted the acorns. "Won-

30 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

derful!" he exclaimed; "this is indeed the work of God." "How long were you looking into the water?" asked the counselor. "Only a second," said the king. "Eighty years have passed as a second," said the other. The king looked at his garments; they were threadbare. He looked at his reflection in the water; he had become an old man. "There is no miracle here, then," he said angrily. "Yes," said the other; "it is God's work, whether he do it in one second or in eighty years."

Comte held that human thought begins in the theological stage, where all phenomena are referred to arbitrary wills in them or beyond them. It then passes to the metaphysical stage, where phenomena are explained by abstract notions of cause, etc. These abstractions are only the ghosts of the theological personalities of the earlier stage; and when they are seen as such, thought passes into the third and last stage of

development, the positive stage. Here we content ourselves with simply studying the orders of coexistence and sequence among things and events, and abandon all metaphysical inquiry as fruitless and hopeless. In this Comte was partly right and partly wrong. His limitation of science to the study of the uniformities of coexistence and sequence among phenomena, and the exclusion therefrom of all causal inquiry, was a stroke of genius. His rejection of abstract metaphysics as only a spectral shadow of the earlier personal explanations was equally profound and important and just. Later philosophic criticism has shown that the categories of abstract metaphysics are only the abstract forms of the self-conscious life, and that apart from that life they are empty or self-contradictory. But Comte was mistaken in ruling out all metaphysics. The human mind was never more prolific of metaphysical constructions than it has been

32 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

since Comte put metaphysics under the ban. It only remains that we give our metaphysics a tenable form, that of personality. Personalism is the only metaphysics that does not dissolve away into self-canceling abstractions. Thus in a way thought returns to the theological stage again, but with a difference. We return, not to a rabble of arbitrary and capricious wills behind nature, but to a Supreme Rational Will, which forever founds and administers the order of the world.

“ Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
Back of the flour the mill ;
Back of the mill is the wheat and the shower
And the sun and the Father's will.”

The Father's will is not back of these things at some awful distance of time and space, but is their present living source ; and they in turn are but the form in which that will expresses and realizes itself. For in him we live and move and have our being.

II

GOD AND HISTORY

THE deistic conception of God as an absentee, while nature runs on of itself, leads to a similar conception of his relation to history. History is supposed for the most part, if not entirely, to go on according to general laws without any supernatural interference, and probably without any supernatural guidance. Thus naturalism, which begins in the physical realm, is extended into the historical field, and considerable misunderstanding results.

The good feature in naturalism, in whatever realm, is its emphasis of law. We can all now see how much we owe to it. We live in peace and sanity where our mediæval ancestors lived in dangerous and destructive obsessions from lack of knowledge of the laws of nature and

34 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

life. Life swarmed with omens, portents, judgments, devils ; and it was as much as a man's life was worth to have a small measure of good sense. As for science, it was infidel, an unfruitful work of darkness, a device of Satan for the destruction of souls, etc. Some illustrations will prove instructive.

The fact of law in the heavens had to be admitted at a pretty early date, at least for the main phenomena ; and religious thought, after divers maledictions, had to adjust itself as well as it could. Of course the Copernican astronomy had to fight its way against texts and ecclesiastical denunciations. "The world also is stablished that it cannot be moved," and "the sun knoweth his going down." Moreover, Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and it must have been moving before. Texts like these clearly established the sun's motion and the earth's rest. Nevertheless, theology had to surrender at last.

All the more was it inclined to hold on to the "signs and wonders" in the heavens, such as meteors, eclipses, and especially comets. An enormous mass of superstition grew up about these things in the earliest times, and when this was reënforced by various texts, interpreted after the fashion of the time, a grotesque cometary orthodoxy was produced from which it was heresy to depart. In the "sound and safe" theological learning of the time they were tokens of divine wrath against human sin, or they presaged distress which should come upon the earth, such as famine, or pestilence, or the death of kings. Such a view had obvious advantages. It gave the clergy a hold on the superstitious imaginations of their flock, and besides it seemed to give a visible manifestation of the divine existence. With all these advantages, the scientific view was denounced as godless and blasphemous as a matter of course, and

36 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

as rooting in a wicked purpose to dethrone God. But plainly the main source of trouble was the false supernatural. Men forgot the 19th Psalm, and looked for God in signs and wonders, but missed him in the orderly heavens. Hence, when the signs and wonders were reduced to law, they supposed that atheism was at the door.

The same sorry history was repeated with meteorology. The theologian formed a theory of storms, and especially of lightning, for which he had the usual stock of texts. Powers infernal and supernal mingled in this theory. The "prince of the power of the air," in particular, played a leading rôle, although witches were cast for prominent parts. Witches were easily managed, as fagots were cheap ; but Satan was fireproof and had to be cast out by exorcisms, the burning of asafœtida, and especially by the ringing of consecrated bells. Of course meteorology was "a godless science," which

was resisted as long as possible. And the reason was that the false supernatural had placed religion in hostility to the notion of law.

The development of medical science reveals the same aberration. The canon law declared the precepts of medicine contrary to divine knowledge. The theory that diseases are due to natural causes which may be discovered, and removed or guarded against, was deprecated as irreligious. There was something of unbelief in seeking cure by natural means. For diseases, especially the more striking epidemics, were either "visitations" from above, or due to the devil; and in either case, "vain was the help of man." To seek for help from the physicians, especially after the doleful experience of Hezekiah, was "flying in the face of Providence," "endeavoring to baffle a divine judgment," "unfaithfulness to the revealed law of God." Every advance of medical science was met with similar

38 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

opposition. Inoculation and vaccination were quite infernal ; quinine was "an invention of the devil ;" and sanitation was a work of unbelief. The use of anæsthetics betrayed an especial depth of rebellion against God ; and one woman in Scotland was burned alive for resorting to them. The use of chloroform was vehemently denounced as contrary to the Word of God ; and Simpson, the discoverer of the anæsthetic, was forced to answer fools according to their folly by pointing out that in the first surgical operation on record, that on Adam for the extraction of Eve, "God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam," thus setting an example for modern surgical practice ! Even so late as 1853, according to Buckle, the Presbytery of Edinburgh thought a day of fasting and prayer, without any sanitary measures, would be an efficient safeguard against the cholera ; and they were sorely scandalized when Lord Palmerston informed

them that it was better to cleanse than to fast, and that wise sanitary measures would be more effective than humiliation. He advised them to destroy the causes of disease by removing and destroying filth, and by improving the houses of the poor. Otherwise, he said, the pestilence would be sure to come, "in spite of all the prayers and fastings of a united, but inactive nation."

Palmerston's letter made a great stir. A couple of hundred years earlier it might have cost him his life. Now his statements are self-evident, and serve only to show how far we have traveled in fifty years.

Sporadic cases of this fear of the natural were often very funny. In Sweden they sometimes have red snow and rain, and this used to pass for a miracle. Linnaeus looked into a case of this kind, and found it due to minute organisms which produced the red color. When Bishop Svedberg heard of this "bald natural-

40 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

ism," he denounced it as an "abyss of Satan," the aim of which was to do away with the miracle. "When God allows such a miracle to take place," he said, "Satan endeavors, and so do his ungodly, self-reliant, worldly tools, to make it signify nothing."

Coleridge relates how some students at Jena, in the attempt to raise a spirit for the discovery of a supposed hidden treasure, were poisoned by the fumes of charcoal, which they were burning in their incantations. It was taken for granted that the devil had destroyed them, and when Hoffmann, a renowned physician of the time, acquitted the devil of all direct concern in the business, and charged the result to the spirit of avarice and the fumes of burning charcoal, the theological faculty took the alarm and denounced such teaching as hostile to religion and tending to atheism. The Swedish bishop and the German professors were in the toils of the false supernatural.

Facts of this kind, and their name is legion, show what we owe to naturalism. It is plain that religion is a very dangerous drug unless wisely administered. When the supernatural paralyzes intelligence and makes men afraid to move because of some threatening superstition, as is still the case with vast masses of men in non-Christian communities, even a period of atheism may be necessary for the cure of the patient. Not without reason did Lucretius declaim against religion as an enemy of the race, for such it often has been and is. The present attitude of the clergy in large sections of Christendom toward education is a significant illustration.

But when we look over this sorry history, the root of the trouble is evidently a false naturalism and a false supernaturalism. Religious thought has always rightly held to the supernatural ; but, from lack of knowledge, it held to it ignorantly and superstitiously, and hence, often, per-

42 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

niciously and destructively. Naturalism, on the other hand, has insisted on the fact of law, but from superficial thought it has often done so mechanically, materialistically, and atheistically, thus justifying the suspicion and dislike with which it has been regarded. But to complete our thought and keep it sane and sweet, both elements must be united. Religion must learn the lesson of law, and science must learn its limitations. The value of naturalism lies entirely in its emphasis of law, and not in the mistaken metaphysics in which naturalism has commonly been set forth. We retain the former and discharge the latter.

The aberration of religious thought in this matter has been well set forth by Buckle in his "History of Civilization in England," by J. W. Draper in his "History of the Intellectual Development of Europe," by Lecky in his "History of Rationalism," and by Andrew D. White in his "History of the Warfare of Science

with Theology." These writers have not always shown a perfect mastery of the logic of their facts, but they have done a great service in showing what a foe to humanity even the Christian religion may become in the hands of a false supernaturalism which eliminates God from the realm of law and finds him only in signs and wonders. Happily, the more intelligent disciples have learned the lesson; and, on the other hand, the more intelligent exponents of law in nature have outgrown the fancy, once so common, that law is irreligious and atheistic. The devotion born of ignorance is now discounted, as not especially pleasing to God or creditable to man.

The presence of God in nature does not mean that God is here and there in the world performing miracles, but that the whole cosmic movement depends constantly upon the divine will and is an expression of the divine purpose. In

44 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

like manner the presence of God in history does not mean exclusively, or mainly, that God is working signs and wonders upon occasion, but rather that God is carrying on the great historical movement and working his will therein. The same false naturalism which has so often reduced the philosophy of nature to a barren mockery has wrought similar effects in the philosophy of history. Here, too, a doctrine of method has been turned into a doctrine of causation, and a deal of sorry stuff has been said about the reign of law, and "the iron chain of necessity," etc.

And this false naturalism has produced an equally false supernaturalism. Both alike have assumed a self-running natural order, which excludes the supernatural except as a thing of interpositions, interferences, omens, prodigies, etc. With this misunderstanding, the believer in God in history has sought for him largely in strange and striking events, in

historical crises, in marvelous coincidences, rather than in the orderly movement and progress of human life and society. An opportune storm, a drought or flood, a good or bad harvest, an outbreak of an epidemic, would be far more significant to many than the greatest mental and moral progress of society. They are not looking for God in the moral realm, but in the field of physical prodigies, and have eyes for scarcely anything else. But the great proof of God's presence in history and the sole significance of that presence lie in the mental and moral realm. The slow moralization of life and society, the enlightenment of conscience and its growing empire, the deepening sense of responsibility for the good order of the world and the well-being of men, the gradual putting away of old wrongs and foul diseases and blinding superstitions, — these are the great proofs of God in history; and in comparison with these all

46 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

physical miracles sink into insignificance, and, except as related to these higher interests, have no value whatever. It is nothing less than pathetic to find men ranging through secular and religious history seeking after a sign, instead of fixing their thought upon this sign of signs, — the spread of reason and righteousness in the earth.

And here again the chief source of our trouble is the absentee conception of God. What the religious mind really seeks is God, and when a false philosophy has removed him to an indefinite distance, and has thrust a baseless fiction, the self-running "Nature," between him and us, there is no recourse but to look for God in prodigies and disorder in general. This unhappy mistake puts religious thought in the wrong from the start and makes it the enemy of enlightenment and progress, thus producing all manner of conflicts of science and religion, and what is still worse, conflicts

of religion and humanity. A very large part of this difficulty is canceled by the divine immanence, which allows us to find God as present in the ordinary movements of life and society as in the strange and uninterpretable things. Life itself, with all its normal forms and interests, represents the divine will and purpose, and from it God is never absent. His will is being done in and through the laws and movements of humanity, as it is through the laws and movements of nature.

But as there is a true naturalism in physical study, so there is a true naturalism in historical study. Without some continuity of law, there could be no thought or articulate experience at all. Even if miracles were a part of the order, we cannot suppose that they would be wrought at random and without any reference to the antecedents and environment. Such unmediated, unrelated mir-

48 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

acles would be irrational interjections, and not parts of articulate speech. Or if freedom be a fact of life, it, too, must be related to law, or it disappears into unintelligible arbitrariness. Hence, however much we may believe that God is in history, or that man is free, we must also look for rules of procedure, or the familiar continuities which we call natural. We may seek to trace the laws of life and thought and development in the progress and unfolding of history. Such study, when thought is clear, has no tendency to reduce history to a mechanical sequence. It merely reveals how things hang together in life and history according to the experienced principles of human and physical nature, and leaves us as free as ever to believe that an unfolding purpose underlies it all as the final cause of the movement.

How hard it is to realize this, or how difficult it is for religious thought to see that the divine activity in history is not

necessarily unmediated, finds interesting illustration in the following from the Life of Mr. Gladstone : " He was delighted (March, 1830) with a university sermon against Milman's 'History of the Jews,' and hopes it may be useful as an antidote, 'for Milman, though I do think without intentions directly evil, does go far enough to be justly called a bane. For instance, he says that had Moses never existed, the Hebrew nation would have remained a degraded pariah tribe, or been lost in the mass of the Egyptian population — and this notwithstanding the promise.' "

As this was written when Mr. Gladstone was only twenty years old, we must not lay it up against him. But it shows that it had not occurred to him then, as it has not occurred to many since, that "the promise" is one thing and the mode of fulfillment another, and that the promise was fulfilled through the existence of Moses. We may still believe in

50 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

the promise after all that Milman or any one else has said ; and at the same time we may believe that Moses was an important factor in its fulfillment. There is no more reason for supposing that the divine purpose in biblical history was unmediated than for supposing it unmediated in modern history. We may well suppose a divine purpose in our national life, but that does not remove the fact that it has been realized in a highly complex history, which admits of being studied by the natural method. Here as elsewhere causality and method of working, or purpose and mode of realization, are to be distinguished. Nowadays every intelligent believer in "the promise" would feel free to trace the manner of its fulfillment in accordance with the laws of life and history. From the standpoint of the divine immanence, God's familiar methods are just as divine as are his other ways that are "past finding out."

Two things, we said, we need to know

in the study of nature : first, the connection of events in an order of law, and, secondly, their cause and interpretation. Similarly, in history, we need to know the order and connection of events, and also their causality and interpretation. Without some knowledge of the order we could be only helpless savages, indeed we could not even live at all. But this is not enough. Such knowledge alone would keep us on the surface. For the full and final understanding of the movement we must know more than these historical and physical laws. We must know the cause and meaning and goal of it all. By eliminating the false naturalism of a mechanical philosophy, and replacing it by the true naturalism of the divine immanence, we make it possible for faith to feel at home even in the world of law, and indeed all the more at home because it is a world of law.

“God is law, say the wise. O soul, and let us rejoice;
For if he thunder by law, the thunder is still his
voice.”

52 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

It has not been my purpose in this section to find God in history, or to illustrate his presence in history, but rather to explain what that presence would mean and where we are to seek it. There is no objection to finding God in prodigies, if there be such things, but it is far more important to find him in the normal activities of men and the unfoldings of history. Prodigies are vanishing quantities in any case, in comparison with the historic life and development of humanity; and here alone does the divine presence have abiding significance. Not less of God but more is what both religion and philosophy demand.

A divine purpose, a moral development in humanity, is the essential meaning of God in history. This history is the unfolding and realization of the divine purpose. We cannot, indeed, trace this purpose in all the details of history, and when we begin to make specific interpretations, we are very apt to go astray.

But the existence of such a purpose is a necessary implication of theistic faith. Sometimes the historical crisis is such, and the co-working of complex factors so marked, that we seem to be aware of a divinity that shapes our ends. Then we speak of a guiding or overruling Providence. But commonly life runs on in the familiar routine, and we seem left to our own judgment to find the way. At such times we have nothing to say of Providence. But it is clear that the only difference is that sometimes the divine purpose seems manifest, while at other times it is hidden. The purpose, however, is equally real and equally controlling at all times, though not equally manifest. Our eyes are holden in this matter mainly because of our deistic philosophy with its self-running nature and absentee God. If this philosophy were set aside, most of our difficulties would disappear of themselves.

Because of this philosophy, we are

54 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

compelled to look for God in the non-natural, and there is always room for the suspicion that if we understood all the hidden connections of the event, we should find it to be natural, and hence undivine, after all. This is the universal and stereotyped form of objection. But this vanishes when we accept the divine immanence. Then we come to a natural which roots in the supernatural, and a supernatural whose methods are natural ; and to this neither science nor religion has any objection.

The same false philosophy underlies the objections to a belief in a providential guidance of the individual life, and also vitiates the popular understanding of the doctrine. The objector rules out the doctrine and refers everything to nature ; and the believer often holds it superstitiously, so as to scandalize both intelligence and conscience.

A story told of Archbishop Whateley well illustrates the popular thought. A

person was once relating in Whateley's presence a case of a wonderful providence. He had been in a shipwreck, and every one but himself had perished. This seemed to him an extraordinary providence, and a demonstration of special care on the part of God. Whateley replied that he knew of a case more wonderful still. Some friends of his had sailed for some distant port and all had arrived safe. And not only they, but all the passengers, had arrived safe. And still more wonderful, the crew and the vessel and the cargo had arrived safe ; and no loss of any kind had been suffered during the voyage. The safety of all surely testified more eloquently of a divine providence than the bare escape of one.

And so it would to every one who has not been confused by the false natural and the false supernatural.

Yet this will undoubtedly seem to many to be a mere fetch, a scheme for appearing to assert a divine providence

56 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

while really denying it. So it must seem to all believers in an absentee God and a self-running nature, which does a lot of unintended things on its own account, and as a kind of mechanical by-product. But we can have no further words with them ; what they need is an intellectual new birth. They seek to walk by sight rather than faith, and they fancy that God works only through interpositions and manifest interferences. God in the law is beyond them.

But surely, it will be said, you do not believe in a special providence ! That kind of thing has long been obsolete in intelligent circles. The answer must begin by inquiring what a special providence may mean.

This word, special, has been very much used, almost overworked, of late years ; and pretty much every one has viewed it as standing for an outgrown idea. Special creation, special providence, etc., are rejected as impossible conceptions.

But this is mostly confusion, and has its root in the fallacy of the universal. Thus with regard to special creation, it is clear that all concrete existence is, and must be, special ; and all creation of the concrete must be as special as the product. Special facts can be produced only by correspondingly special acts. In some sense nothing is special, for everything is a case of a kind ; and in some sense everything is special, for it is a particular case. This is the necessary antithesis of the individual and the universal. No universal animal could be created, but only special animals. There is no universal man, but only special men ; and the creation of each must be correspondingly special. Of course particular things or events may admit of being classed together in a general scheme of law ; and as thus subordinated to a common law, they may be described as not special. But as actual things or events, each is a special case, with its own specific con-

58 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

text or coefficient, and its production demands a correspondingly special activity. In this sense all individuals are special creations, each of which has its own singular equation.

The same is true of special providences. If there be any providence, it must be special ; as a providence in general would be no providence at all, but simply the fallacy of the universal again. Any real providence in our lives must specify itself into perfectly definite and special ordering of events, or it vanishes altogether. In this sense all providences are special providences, or they are nothing.

Here again the divine immanence helps us. If there be purpose in anything, there is purpose in everything. The creative plan must include all its details, and the immanent creative will must specifically realize all its special demands. Both philosophy and religion unite in this view. Philosophy shuts us

up to it, and it is a postulate of religion. But both philosophy and religion also unite in rejecting a doctrine of special providence which implies that things go their own way for the most part, and that God now and then intervenes in a striking fashion for his favorites. On the view of the divine immanence, events are supernatural in their causality and natural in the order of their happenings ; and a so-called special providence would be simply an event in which the divine purpose and causality which are in all things could be more clearly traced, or would more markedly appear, than in more familiar matters. But when we know that divine wisdom and love are in all things, we are less concerned about "special interventions."

In the sense of the Sermon on the Mount, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father, we may all believe in special providences ; indeed, this is a necessary part of any intelli-

60 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

gent faith in God. Every life is included in the divine plan ; and every life is as intimately near and present to the divine thought and care as it would be if all the rest were away. When we reason from our feeble powers, we think God must grow weary and forget. When we reason from our vulgar notions of greatness, we fancy that God, being so great, must ignore us altogether. When we are tangled in verbal snares, we fancy that God deals only with universals, classes, and laws, and has nothing to do with individual cases and details. But when we really reason, whether philosophically or religiously, these illusions vanish, and we see that we are in the hands of him that made us, and that all things and events immediately depend on him. We may not be able to interpret his purpose in all or even in many of the events of our lives, but the purpose is there nevertheless, and we must wait for its unfolding.

In a striking passage in "The Old Faith and the New," Strauss has told us what an awful sense of abandonment attends the giving up of this faith in providence. He says, "In the enormous machine of the universe, amid the incessant whirl and hiss of its jagged iron wheels, amid the deafening crash of its ponderous stamps and hammers, in the midst of this whole terrific commotion, man, a helpless and defenseless creature, finds himself placed, not secure for a moment that, on an imprudent motion, a wheel may not seize and rend him or a hammer crush him to powder. This sense of abandonment is at first something awful." Of this engaging universe he elsewhere in the work says, "We demand the same piety for our cosmos that the devout of old demanded for his God;" and he rebuked Schopenhauer and Hartmann for their pessimistic utterances as "blasphemous." This led to a trenchant retort from Hart-

62 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

mann, who did not fail to point out that "piety" towards this "enormous machine" would be misplaced.

Bacon says, "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind." Similarly, I had rather believe all the fanatical and superstitious interpretations of the divine providence which have been the opprobrium of history, than to hold that there is no guiding purpose and power in the great movement of humanity or in the smaller field of the individual life. But there is no need to make the choice. We may believe that God is in all things and that all things are in him, and that his will is being done, in spite of Strauss's nightmare about the "enormous machine." At the same time we must guard against dogmatic and confident interpretations of the purpose in events. Here is where the doctrine of providence so often becomes a scan-

dal to good sense and reverence ; as when the missionaries who escaped the Chinese Boxers were said to have been " providentially saved," leaving us a little at a loss what to think of those who were massacred. Was there no providence for them ? Such a view would prove embarrassing if thought out. This doctrine of the divine care can be held only in connection with God's eternal plan, and needs eternity for its full vindication. It is a long-range doctrine, — for faith and not for sight. God's providence involves failure as well as success, loss as well as gain, sickness as well as health, bereavement as well as restoration. The ninety-first Psalm expresses our expectation, but the eighth of Romans expresses the fact. In the former, no evil is to befall us and no plague is to come nigh our dwelling ; in the latter, we have all manner of troubles, but come off more than conquerors. Unless we take this larger view, the doctrine of a divine providence

64 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

is a hindrance and exasperation, unworthy of both God and man, and continually rejected by experience. But for this larger view there is value in the doctrine of divine immanence. It removes the plausible but fictitious objections to belief that spring out of the notion of the absentee God. We are in our Father's hands, though we cannot comprehend the mystery of his ways. We must work out our own salvation, and at the same time we may believe that it is God who worketh in us to will and do of his own good pleasure. It is a great aid to faith to be clear of the "enormous machine," and to see that nature itself is providence.

It will be a great step forward when religious thought is adjusted to this conception, when we see the divine causality in all things and the naturalness of the divine working, and when instead of melodramatic irruptions from without we have orderly unfoldings from within along the lines of familiar law and influ-

ence. If our daily bread came to us by raven express, or by a great sheet let down from the skies, it would be no more divinely sent than it is when it comes through the springing grass, or the growing corn, or the ripening harvest. Similarly, God works his will in history not apart from men, but through men and in partnership with them ; and the work is no less divine on that account. An angel flying abroad through the skies to preach the everlasting gospel would amazingly tickle the spiritual groundling, but devoted men and women, speaking from heart to heart in our human speech of the good news of God, would be quite as divine and more effective. For if they hear not Moses and the prophets, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

III

GOD AND THE BIBLE

THE false naturalism of a mechanical philosophy has nowhere wrought greater confusion than in our thought of the Bible. Both friends and foes have been under its influence, and thus the problem has been falsified from the start. The friends have sought to show that, over and above all natural agencies, a supernatural factor must be affirmed. The foes have sought to reduce the Bible to a purely natural product. Neither party suspected that the natural might be only the form of a supernatural causality, and that the supernatural might be the ever-present source and ground of the natural. With such a philosophy the result could be only a drawn battle, closely resembling a scuffle between blind men.

A prominent writer in a recent number of the "Homiletic Review" has the following respecting the naturalistic view of Christianity: "It claims to prove that the religious teachings of the sacred records, both of the old and new covenant, are a gradual development, chiefly or entirely from natural causes, to the greater or less, or even the entire, exclusion of supernatural agencies." Similarly, a distinguished professor of theology has recently told us that Christianity is no development or evolution, but a piece of information supernaturally communicated. If it be not that, it is nothing. And still another dignitary, who seems to be a pillar, declares in megaphonic utterance and with all the air of finality, "I believe in the supernatural book."

As against a false naturalism, these statements have an assignable meaning and are justified. As against a true naturalism, even their meaning is not evident, and they manifestly rest on a false

68 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

naturalism. There is a fear of development, of evolution, of natural agencies; and there is the tacit admission that these things so far as allowed are subtractions from, or denials of, the supernatural. That this has been the assumption in most discussion of this subject is familiar to every reader. But in all this the notion of a self-running nature and an absentee God peeps through. God is supposed to be needed only for supplementing the inadequacies of nature; and if nature be adequate, God is needless. The logic of the position necessitates a polemic against naturalism. But all these fears and distresses would vanish if God were seen to be immanent in all development, all evolution, and all natural agencies. Evidently a profounder philosophy is needed.

The thought of God's immanence in nature and history, of a divine purpose realizing itself through law, has equal

significance for our thought of the Bible. The great desire of religion is to find God, and it has been so zealous for a crude supernaturalism of signs and wonders mainly because it was supposed that the reality of God's existence and presence could not otherwise be secured. No one would ever have the slightest interest in Balaam's ass, or Jonah's whale, or the talking serpent, or the rib that was made into a woman, unless it were thought that to question these things would lead to "bald naturalism," that is, to atheism. The divine immanence, rightly understood, helps to relieve this fear.

The supernatural features of the Bible history on this view are no more divine in their causality than the routine events of every day. They would be simply extraordinary events which, from their form or the circumstances of their occurrence, would make the divine presence and purpose more manifest than is the

70 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

case with familiar matters. They would be signs, or calls for attention, which might be made necessary by the mental and spiritual dullness of men. The traditional discussion has been made void by the traditional confusion about nature. Believers have often thought to mend matters by saying that "miracles are not wrought against nature, but against nature as it is known." "Miracles are occurrences according to laws higher than any yet known." They are really cases of human ignorance rather than of divine interference. But such utterances are either "bald naturalism," furnished with a wig, or else they are declarations that miracles are not wrought at random, but must have a sufficient reason,—a view which no intelligent believer in miracles would deny.

Unbelievers, on the other hand, have generally denied the miracles outright, or have reduced them to misunderstood natural events. Earthquakes, landslides,

volcanoes, catalepsy, resuscitation, hypnotism, etc., serve to explain all the facts. But these speculators fail to show how these familiar experiences could explain the concrete historical results which followed. The song of the angels may have been an hallucination of the shepherds ; but it is the only time before or since that shepherds were so divinely hallucinated. St. Paul may have had a fit on his way to Damascus, but it is the only known fit that had such mighty consequences. The vision of the Risen One may have been an illusion, but when we see that it is the greatest event in all history, we begin to wonder whether illusions can be so potent. In that case, surely, things that are not are mightier than the things that are.

Both believers and unbelievers have done some pretty superficial work on this subject. They have discussed at length the possibility of proving a miracle by testimony, and have generally lost themselves in abstractions. On the

72 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

one hand, it was held that testimony enough would prove anything, for we have only to pile up the testimony long enough, and its falsehood will be a greater wonder than the miracle itself. To this it was rejoined that testimony might conceivably prove the occurrence of an extraordinary event, but could never prove it to be a miracle! Hume, after constructing his famous argument, in which he opposes uniform experience to testimony, proceeds to limit the statement by saying "that a miracle can never be proved so as to be the foundation of a system of religion. For I own that otherwise there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony." Hume here recants his entire argumentation, but then he never was careful about consistency.

But such questions have only academic existence. Abstract and unrelated won-

ders might conceivably be proved by abstract testimony to abstract believers, but no living belief was ever produced in this way. The unbeliever, on the other hand, has commonly confined himself to the physical miracle, and has failed to see that his denial only relocates the wonder without removing it. If we make it subjective only, meaning thereby illusory, we have to explain how illusions came to be so potent, and we have our labor for naught. To recur to the song of the shepherds, it is not so strange that shepherds should see lights and hear voices, but such lights and such voices, combined into such a vision and such a song ! Here is the real wonder ; and the wonder is equally great if we make it subjective, for there was nothing in the common thought and expectation of these men to shape the vision into the good news of God. If any one thinks otherwise, let him experiment with a few cowboys or fishermen, and see if they will

74 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

see or hear anything like the shepherds' vision or the angels' song. Again, if nothing had come out of it, we might well persuade ourselves that Mary or the disciples were hallucinated in their belief that they had seen their risen Lord ; but too much came out of it for any one with a sense of reality long to rest in such a notion. After all, history cannot be based on fictions.

There is, however, a scruple which emerges here from the depths of speculation, and which may be worthy of consideration by both parties. When we ask what is real and what unreal in objective knowledge, we commonly fall back on sense presentation as the sole mark of reality. That is real which is there for the senses of all ; and all else is illusion. For the routine life of every-day fact this test is all-sufficient, but it becomes very doubtful when made absolute and universal. There is not the slightest speculative warrant for making our senses the

measure of reality ; neither is there any warrant for saying the range of perception must be the same in all. If there were persons, otherwise sane and normal, who professed an awareness of things beyond the common sense range, we should have no good reason for questioning the fact. There might be visions and voices for the spirit and in the spirit beyond all common seeing and hearing ; and they might carry with them the same conviction of independent reality that we have in our common sense life. Or, since voice and vision are too suggestive of sense organs, let us say that there might be a spiritual awareness of reality beyond sense which should be a revelation that could never be judged or tested by sense. The condition of such perception might also be a certain preparedness of spirit, as the sea can reflect the heavens above it only when its waters are at peace. But the gist and test of all perception is the conviction of reality that accompanies it.

76 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

This can never be deduced from anything else or referred to anything else. And if there were such awareness of things beyond sense, it could be described only in sense terms, and would thus be liable to misunderstanding. We should try to judge it by sense, when it might transcend sense altogether. Reflections of this kind might lead both the believer and the unbeliever to see that the sense test is not certainly final.

Of course it is well understood that many of the Biblical descriptions of supernatural events are written from the standpoint of causality. They represent the author's faith that God was at work, and hence the events were directly referred to God as the agent without any thought of natural law. They are interpretations rather than descriptions; and while they may be quite correct as interpretations, they are misleading to us with our occidental habits of thought and

speech, as we mistake them for descriptions. If one of those old authors had written modern history, he would doubtless have filled it as full of divine sayings and doings as Jewish history. "The Lord said unto His servant," the king, or the general, or the preacher, or the president. "The Lord sent" the pestilence, or the flood, or the plague of grasshoppers, or the famine, or the earthquake. So it would have run ; and in the causal sense it would have been true ; but there would have been no scenic manifestations in connection with the events. And there is no reason for thinking otherwise of very many of the Bible narratives of this sort. They are oriental modes of expressing a strong conviction of God's presence and activity. The ancient plague of locusts probably looked the same as a modern plague of locusts. ✓ We may well believe that God sent the plague in both cases, but we conceive the phenomenal form of the visitation

78 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

in a different way. We have to distinguish the causality from the method.

The familiar forms of religious speech make this distinction easy. We ascribe many things to God without intending to affirm any miraculous manifestation. A person of devout habit of thought and speech might convince himself that ministerial appointments are made by the Lord, or that General Conference elections are divinely guided ; but if he should be present at the Conference sessions, he would find that this divine causality is for faith rather than sight, and that in the phenomenal manifestation the continuity and uniformity of experience are abundantly illustrated and verified. The mind of the Spirit is commonly revealed only in the vote ; and even then there are hearts that are hardened by unbelief. "In theory," Froude says, speaking of the council of Trent, "ecumenical councils are controlled by the Holy Spirit, but neither Charles nor Paul [the emperor

and the Pope] seemed practically to expect such high assistance. A profane father at the council itself said that the Holy Spirit would come to them from Rome in the courier's bag." Such facts clearly show the need of distinguishing between the essential causality and the method of procedure. If one were never so sure that the Holy Spirit controls councils, the method of control would still remain an open question; and the mind of the Spirit might be revealed through the vote of the council, or even through the "courier's bag," as well as in other ways. The faith in divine causality in no way conflicts with naturalness of method. Of course there may be methods and results which exclude the thought of a divine causality, or at least of divine approval. God in his wrath gave Israel a king, and he sometimes punishes wrongdoers by other wrongdoers, who are guiltier still.

But after we have made all allowance

80 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

on this account, and have also admitted that ancient myth and legend may have crept in here and there, there will still remain a central history from which the miraculous supernatural cannot be eliminated without canceling the history. Of course on this subject strictly decisive demonstration cannot be expected. The facts are too far away to make much impression on us except as they are embodied in present history, and in any case it can be only a matter of interpretation of the facts. And here our presuppositions will determine our conclusions. Atheism of course vacates the discussion, but it equally vacates science, and even reason itself. There can be a rational discussion of this topic only on a theistic basis. God, as the absolute source of all finite existence, is bound by nothing but his own wisdom and goodness. What they dictate, that he does. If they call for uniformity, there is uniformity. If they call for change, there is change.

God never acts against nature because, for him, there is no nature to act against. His purpose, founded in his wisdom and goodness, is alone law-giving for his action, and all else, whatever it may be, is but the expression of that purpose. Nature, conceived as a barrier to God, or as something with which God must reckon, is a pure fiction, a product of unclear thought which has lost itself in abstractions. If, in addition, we conceive God as our Father who is training us as his children in a moral universe, we shall have little difficulty in believing that at times he has come, and comes, near enough to convince us of his presence. But if we do not share this conviction, no historical or other evidence will avail to establish our faith. Everything depends on our presuppositions. If for us God is a personal and moral being, and if his supreme aim in human creation is a moral one, we shall have no apriori hostility to miracle. If we believe in a God in whom

82 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

we live and move and have our being, and if we believe that we may and do enter into fellowship and communion with him in prayer and holy living, it will seem to us the most natural thing in the world that there should be tokens of his presence. The size of the manifestation will be irrelevant. If, on the other hand, there is for us no God, of course there will be no miracle, for the logical conditions of miracle will be lacking. We shall likely keep on talking about "science," and "iron chains of necessity," and the "fixed order of nature," without suspicion of our logical nakedness, and hence without the appropriate shame. Logically, when we are without God, we must be without hope and also without both science and faith.

Our theistic belief may at times betray us into credulity ; but this credulity might be more to our credit than the opposite incredulity that would turn even a voice from heaven into common thunder. Our

readiness to accept rumors of a friend's good works may lead to hasty belief at times, but that is better than a too cool and cautious weighing of evidence lest we credit our friend too soon. Not logic but the historic life of humanity must decide these questions. As Dr. Shedd used to say, a great and consistent system is its own best support and proof. So far as the Christian miracles fit into the Christian thought of a divine revelation of grace and are worthy factors of it, they will never long suffer eclipse. This system with its past history and future outlook is its own proof. Whatever dogmatism may say, science has no objection to it. Historical investigation will never do away with it. And so long as it proves itself the power of God unto salvation, men will believe in it, — miracles and all. It will never long be recommended to faith by diminishing its miraculous character, for when it comes to believing, we insist on believing something

84 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

worth while. There is no attraction in a minimum of belief, provided the belief be really worth believing. Of course these considerations apply only to the fundamental miraculous features of the system.

For us who live to-day the important thing about Christianity is that it is a revelation of God, what he is and what he means, what he has done and is doing for us, what our life means and what our destiny is to be. This revelation makes it humanity's supreme treasure. This revelation is to be understood only in its history; and whatever in that history is necessary for its understanding, be it miracle or what not, we shall retain. Neither science, nor philosophy, nor historical criticism can take it away. But this history is to be studied as a whole, not merely in its crude beginnings or in its miraculous attendants, but also and more especially in the moral and spiritual grandeur of its outcome. The pre-

sent world-historical fact must be the starting-point of our inquiry, as it is the only thing which makes inquiry worth while. If Christianity were not a world-power, a great spiritual force here and now, its origin and history would be a matter of profound indifference to all but a few antiquarians. The miracles, too, are to be studied in connection with the history, and not as isolated and detached wonders. Miracles without moral meaning and religious bearing have as little credibility as the exploits of Jack, the Giant Killer, or the story of Aladdin's lamp. Matthew Arnold's pen turned into a pen-wiper, or Professor Huxley's centaur trotting down Regent Street, belongs to this class. On the other hand, there will be nothing antecedently improbable to the Christian mind and heart in deeds which reveal the Father's presence within and behind the law, and which throw light upon his character and purpose.

86 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

✓ Whatever in Biblical history does not meet this general requirement will probably go, and there will be no loss in its going. Whatever significance it may have had for the times of ancient ignorance, it has lost significance for us. The physical wonder is increasingly unimportant. If we admit its occurrence, we are unable to make any use of it. If the ass did speak, or the axe did swim, we do not seem to be religiously or otherwise advanced thereby. Our present thought of the supernatural is rising from the physical to the ethical and spiritual. Whatever significance the physical wonder may have had for the times of spiritual dullness and ignorance, which could understand nothing else, it is becoming increasingly unimportant for us. Devout and intelligent thought has little interest nowadays in thaumaturgy, by whomsoever it might be wrought, but rather places increasing emphasis on the spiritual miracle of God's life in the soul

and the realization of his kingdom on the earth, as the only thing really worth while, or worthy of God.

In any case, the discussion of this question must be carried on from the standpoint of the divine immanence. When the false naturalism of unbelief is eliminated, supernaturalism will be less disturbed if historical criticism should cast doubt upon details. It is no longer a question of divine causality, but of method. Belief need not fear evolution, or development, or natural agencies, when it is seen that the divine will and purpose underlie them all, and that they are really nothing but the form of the divine working. And unbelief, on the other hand, must not be thought to have triumphed because natural methods are traced in the supernatural revelation.

But as there is a true naturalism in the study of both nature and history, so there may be a true naturalism in the

88 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

study of the Bible and our Christian revelation. Even when we come to the distinctly miraculous, we cannot suppose it to break with all law. We can understand miracles as signs whereby sense-bound minds are made aware of a divine power and purpose which they would otherwise miss, in their subjection to the mechanical movement of nature; but we cannot suppose them wrought at random, and without any reference to the antecedents and environment. Thus if we suppose God should design to make a revelation of higher mathematical truth, even by way of miracle, it is clear that the miracle would not be wrought among the Patagonians or Hottentots, but rather there where the development of civilization and of mathematical knowledge had made a place for the reception of the revelation. Even seed divinely sown needs a prepared soil, if there is to be any worthy fruitage; and thorny and stony ground does not furnish such a soil.

To continue this passage, which is borrowed from the author's essay, "The Christian Revelation," it is plain that the revealing movement admits of being studied from the natural standpoint; that is, we may seek to trace the familiar laws of life and thought and history and human development in the progress and unfolding of the movement. Assuming that God was revealing himself in Jewish history and in the lives and thoughts of holy men, it is still permitted to inquire whether this revelation breaks with all known historical and psychological laws, or whether we can trace even in revelation laws with which we are elsewhere familiar. And there is nothing in such study to eliminate the supernatural, or to make the presence of the divine any less real or undeniable. If we find Paul's thought growing and changing with unfolding experience, if we find the development of the church led by circumstances into new channels,

90 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

no one need be disturbed thereby who has not banished God from life and history altogether. On the contrary, such study lends an absorbing human and rational interest to the problem, which is impossible when the human is paralyzed by the divine, and the natural is displaced by unintelligible arbitrariness. In God's world the teachings of history and the indications of experience are as truly a revelation as any series of texts or any voice from the skies.

This is the true naturalism of Biblical study. It never gives any final explanation, but it seeks to trace the continuity of law and rational connection through the revealing work. Its nature and value may be seen from the following illustration: It is common to say that a man is explained by his time and environment. For instance, Newton would have been impossible among the Bushmen. His work demanded the existence of civilization and the work of previous mathe-

maticians. This is undoubted, and in this sense Newton is explained by his time and environment. But it would be highly superficial to rest in this. The time and environment were the same for every mathematician in England ; but they were ineffective until combined with the special genius of Newton ; and this is something which time and environment never account for. Hence, in studying a man's life, we certainly need to consider his antecedents and surroundings ; but the man himself is a factor apart, conditioned by these things, but not to be confounded with them or deduced from them. In the same way the naturalistic study of revelation can show important preparations, historical continuities, psychological uniformities, rational harmonies, but we reach nothing final until we come to the immanent, self-revealing God.

The method of false supernaturalism, on the other hand, which fears all rational

92 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

study of the subject, has been well illustrated as follows: The Sunday-school lesson is on Peter's vision as he was sleeping on the housetop. An inquiring child, familiar only with our peaked roofs, asks how Peter could sleep on the housetop without rolling off. One teacher sharply rebukes him for presuming to doubt the Word of God. Another teacher admits the propriety of the question, but reminds the child that there is no difficulty, as "with God all things are possible." Both teachers resent the suggestion that Eastern houses have flat roofs as "bald naturalism" and "an abyss of Satan," due to a desire to eliminate miracles from the Word of God, and smacking strongly of latent infidelity.

This well illustrates the shortcoming of abstract supernaturalism in its treatment of the Bible, and the complete paralysis of thought which results from it. It is indeed true that with God all things are possible, but it is also true that in

God's world all things are not equally probable. There is a certain divine style which we look for in God's work. There are ways of doing things which we expect to find in anything coming from him. Pure, unmediated supernaturalism leads to such defenses of the faith as the routing of the geologists by the consideration that God could make imitation fishbones and put them in the rocks if he wished, or a whale four miles long if it were his pleasure. In the same way we might argue for all the miracles of the Gospel of the Infancy. The child Jesus made clay birds and clapped his hands over them, and they lived and flew away. On another occasion Joseph cut some lumber too short, and the child stretched it by a miracle. Why not? With God all things are possible. Against such vagaries a true naturalism is needed to defend us; or perhaps a small amount of good sense would suffice.

As against false naturalism the wise

94 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

believer insists that the fact of natural methods in God's self-revealing work in no way dispenses with the fact of the divine purpose and presence. As against false supernaturalism he insists that God may be as present in his orderly methods and the steadfast ordinances of the world as in any or all miracles whatsoever. And in any case, the important thing is not to find miracles, but to find God and learn his will and do it.

If we were devising a method of revelation which should be perfectly simple, and which could be polemically used, especially in the construction of "evidences," we should almost certainly decide upon a scheme of definitely dictated and infallible texts, with a proper bolstering of miracles and prophecies for proofs. This was long the scheme of traditional orthodoxy, but it has withered away. It was purely academic and *ad hoc* in its construction, and few persons now regret

its passing. God's method in revelation, as in nature, proves to be not so simple and compendious as we had thought. But when we remember that God is in all history and has never left himself without a witness, and when we further remember that the divine method is one of growth and slow development out of the natural into the spiritual, we are not surprised to find him using the legends and picture-stories and naïve interpretations of early men as vehicles for communicating to them deeper and higher conceptions of himself. In themselves these things were imperfect and crude enough, but as vehicles of revelation they nevertheless revealed. Why should not God begin with men where they are, intellectually and morally, and use even their myths and imaginings to lift them to higher insight? No one who has not first banished God from both history and the world need be offended by such a method, if investigation should show it

96 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

to have been the fact. And the justification of the method is found in the fact that in this way God has made a revelation of himself, a blessed and growing insight into what he is and what he means, which is our great and chief source of hope and inspiration, and the corner-stone of our civilization. The contents of revelation and the method of revelation are questions quite distinct. All that faith is really concerned with is the divine contents ; it is willing to find the method whatever investigation may show it to have been.

Questions of this kind admit, of course, of no demonstrative solution. Crude dogmatists indeed fancy that argument can be found which will reduce all doubters to silence and force the conclusion upon the most unwilling mind ; but this only shows how exhaustive and exhausting their ignorance is. The conflict lies back of logic. It is a conflict of world-views, and of dispositions back of world-views.

These have to fight it out in the field of life and history in the supreme struggle for existence. And when we take the revelation as a whole, viewing it not only in its crude beginning, but also in its growing history and divine outcome, the religious mind will have no difficulty in believing that God spake in past times unto the fathers by the prophets in divers portions and in divers manners, and at the end of those times spake unto us by his Son. And the irreligious mind will go its own way with, to say the least, no better logic, and without any inspiration for life. History shows pretty clearly how the survival of the fittest will decide between them.

This matter of the Bible has been so generally confused in popular thought by the failure to distinguish between revelation and its method that some further discussion seems desirable. In particular the conservative has decided what reve-

98 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

lation must be, and how it must be made, and any departure from his view is held to make the Word of God of none effect. With this prejudice in mind, he rarely makes an inductive study of what revelation really is, or how it has been made. As he knows what must be, this is quite unnecessary. He infers the truth of the Bible from its inspiration, instead of inferring the inspiration of the Bible from the greatness of its contents. And the meaning of inspiration is inferred from apriori reflection, rather than from a study of its products. The method is essentially apriori and rationalistic. "Logical consequences" are invoked to cast discredit and opprobrium on anything the conservative may dislike. Inerrancy must be affirmed, or we are all at sea. To admit error in the Scriptures must destroy all reverence for the supernatural authority of the Bible. The theologians who make such an admission may be able to split the hair with suffi-

cient dexterity to convince themselves of their own expertness, but they never can convince the common people of good sense that the Bible can be of God and yet have man's imperfections. If it is not wholly supernatural and absolute truth from God, men ask where is the basis for the religious faith and theology of Christianity ; for such knowledge cannot possibly come except by revelation and inspiration from God. It must be a " piece of information supernaturally communicated " and verified.

So the conservative reasons. If the Bible is not technically infallible, it is worthless as a religious guide. If the ass and the serpent did not speak, or the axe did not swim, we may not believe in Jesus Christ as the light of the world, nor accept his revelation of the Father. 5

But the short and easy method of the verbalist and the peremptory decisions of the logical-consequence maker no longer carry conviction, but rather serve

100 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

only as the occasion of a reminiscent and compassionate smile. The truth is, that this conservative doctrine of Scripture, so far from being a source of power, is a prolific source of doubt and difficulty. Unwittingly, of course, but nevertheless in effect, the conservative of this type is one of the chief enemies of the faith. If his view were simply unscholarly, we might endure it by thinking of something else ; but it is the chief hindrance to faith with well-meaning men, and the great point of attack by opponents of Christianity. Accordingly we find in our schools that the persons most likely to fall into infidelity are those who have been brought up in a mechanical conservatism, and have been allowed to know only what was supposed to be safe. And as for opponents of Christianity, I have read a deal of anti-Christian literature in the last thirty years, and, excepting that of the atheistic and materialistic type, practically all of it consists of objections springing, not

out of the essential truths of Christianity, but out of gratuitous difficulties arising from the traditional doctrine of Scripture. No greater external aid to faith could be found than the modification of this doctrine which the facts are forcing upon us.

Again, conservatism of this type should be reminded of its own history. It should recall its exploits and adventures with astronomy and geology and biology. It should remember that scarcely a step of progress has been made which has not been resisted by some one on the ground that it would overthrow faith in the Bible. The claims of this sort make a most grotesque collection, ranging all the way from attacks on astronomy and geology and geography and political economy to demurrers against anæsthetics, lightning-rods, fanning-mills, and women speaking in religious meetings. This humiliating history would be a profitable subject of reflection for any one who is inclined to resist any departure from his

conception on the ground that it would make the Word of God of none effect. The most pronounced conservative now holds many things which were once rejected as heresy ; but his mental attitude is fixed. He is ready to build the tombs of dead prophets, but living ones must be stoned.

The conservative should also remember that questions of fact can never be settled, so as to stay settled, by authority, but only by the appropriate methods of investigation and evidence. Bulls against comets are futile. The good church father who refused to look through Galileo's telescope, lest he should see Jupiter's moons, has had many imitators, but he was not a model investigator. And even after the motion of the earth had been renounced and cursed, the earth kept on moving as before. Conservatism has inflicted not a little humiliation and disgrace upon religion at this point. As a rule, it has at first denied or de-

nounced the facts, and has shown that they could not be facts as they would make the Word of God of none effect, or, still worse, were contrary to the Confession of Faith or the "Consensus of the Church." After a while it has admitted that they were facts, indeed, but of no importance ; and finally it has forgotten that it ever denied that they were facts. ✓
Come and let us reason together and look at the facts together, must be the scholar's motto ; and he must always aim at adjusting his thoughts to the facts, and never at adjusting the facts to his thoughts. For facts still remain stubborn things, and sooner or later will have way, — Popes, Bishops, Councils, General Assemblies, and General Conferences to the contrary notwithstanding.

But now some good conservative will ask if we are not dissolving everything away. Is anything left after such reasoning? This question roots in the failure to

distinguish between the essential truths of revelation and the conception respecting the mode and method of the revelation. The truths stand fast ; but the conception concerning the mode and method varies. We have substituted for immediate dictation the conception of a historical and gradual unfolding in accordance with God's general laws in life and history and humanity, but we believe no less in the revelation ; indeed, it seems to us diviner than ever, now that it has become more human ; and more supernatural than ever, now that we trace God's universal natural methods in it.

And this leads to the reflection that all critics, advanced and conservative alike, should fix their attention on the central ideas of revelation and discern the subordinate and relatively unimportant nature of their inquiries. Christian thought does not centre around the authorship of the Pentateuch or the unity of Isaiah, the inerrancy of the Biblical record or

the historicity of Daniel. It centres in the thought of God the Father Almighty, of Jesus Christ his Son and our Lord, of the sanctifying, inspiring, life-giving Spirit, and of the kingdom of God. This is the gist and root of the whole matter; and from this our thought should go out and to it our thought should ever return; for this is what gives meaning and value to Bible history and Bible study. The supreme thing is not to affirm or deny higher criticism, not to affirm or deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, not to affirm or deny the historicity of Daniel, but to preach the Gospel and bring in the kingdom of God. This only is of faith concerning the Scriptures, that God has revealed himself through them and the history which they record as a God of righteousness and grace. And this only is of faith respecting Christianity, that it is God's great and supreme revelation of what he is and what he means for men. To depart from this faith is

106 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

heresy. To live and work in this faith is to be a child of the kingdom. Given these central truths and the accordant life, we may be sure that all other matters will adjust themselves in time. If the radical be over-radical, life and reflection will restrain him. If the conservative be unduly timid, experience and further study will encourage him. And on the plane of a common devotion to this kingdom and Lord, all Christians should meet. They would then find their differences fading away entirely, or at least sinking into relative insignificance ; and they would keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. Moreover, out of this method of life will come a conviction of the truth which can be reached in no other way, and which will dissolve away all the formal doubts which swarm about the speculative and deductive treatment of the subject. And this is the only method by which living conviction can be attained. Abstract reflection on mira-

cles and prophecies, after the manner of the traditional apologists, never convinced anybody, and never will, unless his mind be made up in advance.

And this recurrence to the central truths of revelation and their realization in life contains the solution of another difficulty which the conservative often feels, and which is indeed his chief theoretical difficulty and the foundation of his polemics and the source of the fearsome "logical consequences" which infest his imagination. What security, he asks, have we, if we do not maintain the strict inerrancy of the Scriptures? This difficulty is a real one with many, and it continually reappears in conservative polemics. It is only an echo, however, of an *apriori* rationalism which has vanished from the field of philosophy and maintains a precarious existence among conservative Biblical critics. More specifically, the conservative here is puzzling over the problem of certainty and ulti-

108 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

mate authority, which he evidently thinks is a matter of logic and demonstration.

But this problem is purely academic and barren, and is several generations out of date. The question has long been shelved as idle and futile. Philosophy, to which the problem belongs, long since made the discovery that real and concrete certainty is always a matter of practical experience and not of speculation. Abstract discussion and consequence-making can go on forever ; but contact with reality gives the decision. For instance, the trustworthiness of the senses could be debated world without end ; and if we remained in the closet, we should conclude that the senses could never be trusted, because we can lay down no certain standard. But the matter settles itself when we come out of the closet and use our senses. Then we learn that though theoretically their authority is open to question, practically we can depend upon them.

Philosophy has made the further discovery that concrete certainty in general has a complex root in life as a whole. There is no simple and single objective standard, labeled certainty, which may be mechanically applied for the testing of truth. The living mind itself, with its interest and tendencies and furniture of experience, is the only standard ; and this mind, in immediate contact with reality, attains to certainty about many things, and ignores the skeptical challenge as an antiquated verbal contention. ✓

The application to the Scriptures is obvious. Their value and authority can be determined only in the concrete life and experience of the church. Syllogizing and fearsome logical consequences are as empty here as they are in the problem of knowledge in general. They make a show of rigor and vigor, but are only sound and fury, signifying nothing.

And in addition to being concrete, the problem is also complex. Those who

110 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

would find the source of certainty and the seat of authority in the Scriptures alone, or the church alone, or reason and conscience alone, rather than in the complex and indivisible co-working of all these factors, should be reminded of the history of religious thought. The stiffest doctrine of Scripture inerrancy has not prevented warring interpretations; and those who would place the seat of authority in reason and conscience are forced to admit that outside illumination may do much for both. In some sense the religion of the spirit is a very important fact, but when it sets up in opposition to the religion of a book, the light that is in it is apt to turn to darkness. Individual dark lanterns never contribute much to the light of the world. But, on the other hand, book and church have had to yield to the growing spiritual insight of the religious community. The stoutest verbalist and ecclesiastic to-day would not tolerate things on which once

they vehemently insisted, but which have been outgrown, although the texts once relied on still exist. All interpretations of words must be functions of the interpreters as well as of dictionaries and grammars. Even papal infallibility, which would seem to be a simple doctrine, according to a good Catholic lawyer means only that the Pope is the court of last resort, something like the doctrine that the king can do no wrong. Plainly, no mechanical religious standards can save us from falling back on the complex life of the religious community as the real interpreter and judge.

Again, the Bible does not exist as a storehouse of arguments for confounding the unspiritual and compelling the assent of unwilling minds. Had this been its purpose, it could have been greatly improved. But it is rather a book of religion, a revelation of God. And when it is used in the honest desire and purpose to know God's will, it will always

112 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

vindicate its supreme religious significance in spite of the closet philosopher, the verbal quibbler, the higher critic, and the dealer in logical consequences. In this field experience is the only source of certainty and test of truth. Here, as elsewhere, the caviler and logical-consequence man can pick flaws ; and here, as elsewhere, good sense ignores him. The appeal must always be to life and experience, and not to abstract theorizing. We need no infallible authority, whether of book or church ; and in any case we have no such authority. What we need, and what we have, is a truth that carries practical conviction with it. This conviction is weakened only when we begin to look for some external authority which shall be subject to no objection. It is well known that the argument for the infallibility of any alleged authority always has to work with evidence so fallible that the conclusion must ever remain logically precarious. There is always a link in the

reasoning, or a factor in our presuppositions, which logically opens a wide door to fallibility. Such argument is of use only for those who have already made up their minds, or who wish to intimidate others. Logically it is always open to fatal objection; and psychologically it overlooks the actual process of the mind in attaining living belief. Except to writers of old-fashioned apologetics and dealers in proof-texts, it is not important that the Bible should be verbally inspired and technically infallible; but it is important that men should find God in it and through it. And that God can thus be found, even without profound learning and critical apparatus, is the concurrent testimony of the saints of all ages. There is a divine immanence in the Word as well as in the Work, which makes it

"The fountain light of all our day,
A master light of all our seeing."

Not abstract miracles and prophecies, but

114 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

this abiding, world-historical significance of the Bible in the religious life of humanity is its great evidential support, and all that gives it any claim upon our faith.

A story told by Sabatier about an old monk named Serapion illustrates the distinction between a doctrine and the conception of the doctrine, and the importance of bearing it in mind.

Far back in the early times, the story runs, Serapion, a most worthy monk, fell into the error of the Anthropomorphists. The Bible seemed to him full of anthropomorphic expressions, and he took them literally; and one day Paphnutius, a priest, and Photinus, a deacon, called on him, hoping to recover him from his delusion. They pointed out that God is a spirit, and as such can have no form or organs. Finally, partly by their arguments and partly by their authority, they persuaded Serapion to renounce his error. Then Paphnutius and Photinus proceeded to give thanks to God for hav-

ing restored the holy man to the true faith. But in the midst of their thanksgiving Serapion threw himself on the ground weeping and wailing because they had taken away his God and left him no one to pray to.

Which thing is an allegory. Serapion could not distinguish between the doctrine and his own crude conception; and when the latter was set aside, he thought the doctrine itself gone. There is a certain pathos in such cases, ancient or modern, yet not without a touch of the ludicrous. Childish things are not attractive when they outlast childhood. Whatever sympathy we may feel for Serapion, we must not allow him to fix our doctrine of Scripture, or anything else.

IV

GOD AND RELIGION

THUS far we have considered the bearing of the divine immanence upon our thought of nature, history, and the Bible. We have seen that it discharges the false or "bald" naturalism of popular thought, and dispels the fears of naturalism which haunt so much religious discussion. Instead of a self-sufficient mechanical nature, it gives us a supernatural natural, that is, a natural which forever depends on the divine will and purpose, and a natural supernatural, that is, a divine causality which proceeds according to orderly methods in the realization of its aims. We have now to consider the significance of this doctrine for the religious life.

And here, too, popular thought has been confused greatly by the traditional

misconception of the natural. As God was supposed to be in nature and history only, or at least mainly, in the form of signs and wonders, so he was supposed to be in the soul only, or at least mainly, in the form of manifestations of a somewhat anarchic and prodigy-working type. And as the familiar laws of nature were supposed to represent no divine purpose, but only a mere determination of a blind and unpurposed mechanism, so the familiar laws of life and mind, and all the normal workings of human nature, were supposed to be unrelated to any divine purpose, and were dismissed as "merely natural." Of course, in both cases, by the logic of the situation it was necessary to look for the divine in the extraordinary and anomalous. And the dealers in such things verily thought that they were defending religion, and never suspected that they were really the victims of a shallow philosophy. The uproar over Dr. Bushnell's "Christian Nurture" fifty

118 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

years ago is a good illustration. Many ark-savers experienced the severest alarms at what seemed to them an ignoring of the supernatural.

Now here again the divine immanence helps us. We are in our Father's house and Father's hands ; and though we may not be able always to trace his presence or interpret every feature of his work, yet his will is being done. And this is really what faith seeks for in this matter. The soul longs to find God, to believe that it has not fallen into life headlong, to feel that it is in the hands of him that made it, and that he is ever near. The religious soul fears naturalism because nature seems to be a barrier between God and itself, and to thrust him into a past so distant as to make him doubtful and to put him beyond any real, living, present interest in us. And a naturalism of that sort is to be feared, as in its presence high faith is sure to wither, or cry out in mortal anguish. It is not nature

or law that the soul fears, but nature or law without God in it. It is not the burdens and distresses of life that oppress and depress us, but burdens and distresses that spring from nothing and lead to nothing. If they are appointed by our Father for our discipline and development, we can bear them with good courage and unrepining hearts; we break down only when we view them as the blind raging of a storm. Now from this distress the belief in the divine immanence saves us. He is in the darkness as well as in the light, in failure and sorrow as well as in success and joy, in death as well as in life. He is the God of all things, and is God over all things, and is blessed forevermore. This view, we repeat, is what religious thought really desires to reach in its opposition to naturalism and its emphasis on the supernatural. Its real aim is to find God, not prodigies; but it errs and strays from the way because of the crude philosophy which

banishes God from the natural and finds him only in the strange, the anomalous, the chaotic. And this illiteracy culminates in the fancy that this is the only religious view.

But after we had driven off false naturalism from the philosophy of nature and history, we found a place for a true naturalism. Similarly here, after we have driven off false naturalism from the spiritual life, we find a place for a true naturalism. In other words, the conviction that we live and move and have our being in God does not decide the form and mode of God's work in us ; and to learn this, we must fall back on experience.

The great error of religious thought in this matter is the same as its error at the corresponding point in its thought of God in nature. It has sought to walk by sight rather than by thought and faith. Hence the conception has been almost exclusively thaumaturgic. A changed life, a

clean heart, a strengthened will, a deeper moral insight, and a purer devotion would be very poor marks of a divine indwelling in comparison with some psychological exaltation which, by its strangeness or excess, might impress persons of wonder-loving mental habit. Hence, again, there has been a very general tendency in the history of the church to look upon emotional ebullencies, anarchic raptures, anomalous and spectacular experiences, as the truly classical manifestations of religion, while the interaction of religious feeling, intellect, and moral will has been viewed as a falling away from the highest and only classical form. To guard against this error, we must analyze our problem somewhat at length.

And first of all we must bear in mind that it is not a question of the reality and necessity of God's work in the soul in order that we may attain unto the life of the spirit. Upon occasion we should

122 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

steadfastly deny any Pelagian self-sufficiency of the human will, and that for both philosophical and religious reasons. It is simply a question respecting the form of this divine co-working. Is it natural or supernatural?

This question at once reveals the fact that these terms have peculiar meanings in religious speech. Natural is often used to mean the sensuous in distinction from the spiritual, as in the text, "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." Sometimes it means that which is possible to man's unaided powers; and the affirmation of a supernatural means a power from above which reinforces our weakness. And sometimes natural means that in which an order of law can be observed and traced. It is in this last sense that we use it here. We are far enough from affirming that man is sufficient unto himself in the spiritual life. Such a view is a mark of gross philosophic and religious illiteracy. The

professional defender of the faith seldom discriminates these widely differing meanings, and thus begins, continues, and ends in confusion.

God's work in nature and history, we have seen, is not against law, but through law. The thaumaturgic element, in any case, is a vanishing factor in comparison. A moment's reflection convinces us that the same must be true of God's work in the soul. It is not against the laws of mind, but through them, that God realizes his purposes in us. This is an absolute condition of our mental and moral sanity. If we are to lead a moral and rational life of any sort, there must be an order of life on which we can depend. If religion is not to be an excuse for indolence, we must work out our own salvation. It is indeed God who worketh in us, but he works according to law, and in such a way as to call for all our effort. He gives us spiritual bread as he gives us daily bread. In the latter case the

124 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

bread supply does not come by any celestial express, but through the springing corn and the ripening harvest; yet it is from God after all. In like manner spiritual blessing is not conferred in any scenic and unmediated fashion, but by power moving along the lines of normal life, and manifesting itself in its products rather than its abnormal methods. And in the case of both physical and spiritual bread, we have to work for it. ✓

The religious life is the last realm to be brought under the notion of law. Law is now a matter of course in physics, astronomy, meteorology, medicine, hygiene, education, but it is very imperfectly apprehended in its religious bearing. In all those subjects we see that there are conditions to which we must conform if we would accomplish our ends. No one would expect to get a harvest by prayer alone, while neglecting to plow and sow. No one would ✓

expect to become educated without appropriate labor. But in religion we have not yet learned this lesson. We expect God to work in the spiritual realm immediately and without reference to law. We are simply to ask and receive. To speak of law is to thrust a barrier between the soul and God. To suggest conditions is an act of unfaith. To work for spiritual blessing through the laws God has made is to lean to our own understanding and have confidence in the flesh. Education is the work of man ; as for the work of the Spirit, we cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. In all this the false naturalism and false supernaturalism of untrained thought are manifest. God's action is supposed to be above and apart from law, rather than through it, or in accordance with it ; and religion is supposed to be something apart from living interests, a thing of frames and retreats and special exercises, rather than a spiritual

principle for all living, the abiding inspiration of all work.

Religious thought cannot too soon unlearn this false supernaturalism and learn the lesson of law. We must lay to heart and remember that the fact that God worketh in us in no way vacates the rule that we must work out our own salvation. The wise man proceeds in spiritual things as in physical things. In the latter case, he inquires for the laws which rule and adjusts himself to them. In the former case, he asks for the laws of successful and developing life and adjusts himself to them. He avails himself of all his knowledge and of every means of influence in both cases. This we must all do. We must study the order of life, and avail ourselves of all the normal means of influence for developing character and of all the great institutions evolved by humanity on its upward way. We must look upon the family, the school, the social order, the great industrial and

commercial activities, as ordinances of God, or as instruments through which he works as certainly as through the church and formal religious exercises. Prayer and meditation of course will always have their place and function, but they are by no means the only way of reaching God and securing his aid. We must discern the divine presence and agency in life as a whole, and work with him along the natural lines which he has established, in the full faith that thus we are co-workers with God, and that results thus reached are as divine as they would be if reached by some miraculous fiat. The undivineness of the natural is the great heresy of popular religious thought, and a great source of the weakness of the religious life. Good intentions, zeal, and deep religious desire often come to nought from being left to lose themselves in formless religiosity, instead of being directed into normal lines of effort in accordance with human

128 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

needs and human nature. And there will be no lasting reform in religion until we return to a true naturalism in this matter, recognizing that only God can give the increase, and also that God will give no increase unless we plant and water, and further recognizing the natural order of things as a part of the divine appointment for our spiritual training, and as the field for our life's work. ✓

Furthermore, in our search for God in life, we must clearly define to ourselves what the divine aim is in all his dealing with us. This is necessary to shut out another error springing from the doctrine of the divine immanence itself. In a purely metaphysical sense this immanence means only that all finite things immediately depend on God; and in this sense the doctrine carries no moral quality with it. From this point of view it would be easy to use the doctrine in such a way as to cancel moral distinctions.

We escape this result by distinguishing an ideal order in life which by no means always coincides with the actual. Metaphysically, God is equally in both, but only the former represents his highest purpose ; and in this sense of approval and sympathy God is in the former and not in the latter. Thus the conception of the supernatural, or of the divine presence, undergoes still another transformation. It has now a moral test or measure, and only that which conforms to such a test is to be called divine. God is indeed in all things, but in some things for their furtherance and in others for their destruction, in some things in love and in other things in wrath and judgment.

This point has its significance only in relation to the moral world. When we are dealing with a purely physical system, there is no difficulty in making all things and events the immediate work of God ; but some embarrassment emerges

130 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

when we come to the moral field. Here some very undivine things are done with, apparently, very undivine consequences. Some weak heads have been so heated by the new wine of immanence as to put all things on the same level, and make men and mice of equal value. But there is nothing in the dependence of all things on God to remove their distinctions of value.

One confused talker of this type was led to say that he had no trouble with the notion of a divine man, as he believed in a divine oyster. Others have used the doctrine to cancel moral differences; for if God be in all things, and if all things represent his will, then whatever is is right. But this too is hasty. Of course even the evil will is not independent of God, but lives and moves and has its being in and through the divine. But through its mysterious power of selfhood and self-determination the evil will is able to assume an attitude of hostility

to the divine law, which forthwith vindicates itself by appropriate reactions. These are not divine in the highest or ideal sense. They represent nothing which God desires or in which he delights ; but they are divine in the sense that they are the things to be done under the circumstances. The divine reaction in the case of the good is distinct from the divine reaction against evil. Both are divine as representing God's action, but only the former is divine in the sense of representing God's approval and sympathy. All things serve, said Spinoza. The good serve, and are furthered by their service. The bad also serve, and are used up in the serving. According to Jonathan Edwards, the wicked are useful "in being acted upon and disposed of." As "vessels of dishonor" they may reveal the majesty of God. There is nothing, therefore, in the divine immanence, in its only tenable form, to cancel moral distinctions or to minify retribution. The divine re-

action against iniquity is even more solemn in this doctrine. The besetting God is the eternal and inescapable environment; and only as we are in harmony with him can there be any peace.

This point also deserves consideration, for here too a false naturalism has betrayed popular thought into error. Punishment is an unpleasant conception, and many have thought to escape it by reducing it to natural consequence. But they have failed to ask what natural consequence means and whence it comes. If they would pursue this inquiry, especially in view of the divine immanence, they would discover that God's will and purpose are immanent in all natural consequence. Thus preëminently in "natural consequence" is God's will being done, and his attitude and purpose revealed. What God thinks of sin, and what his will is concerning it, can be plainly seen in the "natural consequences" that attend it. The inner dis-

cord, the mutual distrust, the aching void, the atrophy of faculty, the depotentialization of the spirit and its gradual sinking toward lower forms, — all these are highly significant “natural consequences.” We see natural law busily engaged in rooting out an evil stock, — which means only that God will not give them living room any longer. Some persons are in the current just above the falls. Some are going on the rocks. Some are sowing to the flesh and are reaping the appropriate corruption. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap, is the great law of natural consequences ; and there is not much comfort in it for one who thinks to escape God by dodging behind nature and law. In law itself we are face to face with God ; and natural consequences have a supernatural meaning.

With this distinction between the ideal and the actual in mind, it is plain that the supreme mark of the divine presence in

134 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

the higher sense must be found in the moral and spiritual realm. Nothing whatever that could happen in the physical world in the way of signs and wonders would be of the slightest significance except as it was related to some spiritual end ; and in God's world such unrelated wonders must be forever incredible. A show of celestial fireworks which ended in itself would be unworthy of both God and man. Similarly, no extraordinary occurrences in the psychological world in the way of outpourings, exaltations, emotional fireworks, would be of the slightest significance except as they led to deeper moral and spiritual life. Apart from this outcome we have psychology, neurology, pathology, rather than religion. From failure to make this spiritual connection we fall back into "mere naturalism."

And this, too, is a point which the religious teacher cannot too much lay to heart. Every minister of much experi-

ence knows how much of this non-moralized religion there is among ignorant people. They seek for the divine in the wrong place, and mistake pathology for religion. Of course we may not prescribe what the emotional forms of religious experience shall be in all cases, nor what manifestations it may please God to make to the seeking soul, but we may affirm with all conviction that no psychological fact whatever has any religious value whatever apart from its moral and spiritual contents. Unless it leads to holiness of heart and life, it is only a phase of abnormal psychology without any truly religious significance. St. Paul thought little of "tongues" in comparison with love and righteousness.

We are willing, then, to allow religious experience to be anything whatever, within the limits of decency and sanity ; but when it comes to giving it a divine significance, we insist on applying the rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them ;"

136 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

and we further insist on rejecting as mere delusion everything whatever that will not stand this test. This is the one and only sure mark of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. According to St. Paul, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." Thus he makes his abode with us.

If this position needed any support, it would find it in the more extensive and careful study of religious phenomena with which the educated world is now generally familiar. The religious history of humanity, quite apart from Christianity, is full of strange and abnormal experiences which are supposed to be peculiarly religious. Mohammedanism and Hinduism abound in phenomena of this sort. They are even possible on the purely physiological plane through the influence of alcohol and anæsthetics and narcotics.

Such things are interesting as showing certain mysterious possibilities of human

nature, at least in some of its specimens ; but they are far more interesting as showing the necessity we are under of estimating the value of all such experiences by their moral and spiritual contents. Apart from these contents we are not dealing with religious facts in the Christian sense, but only with strange psychological and neurological phenomena ; and if they were never so well attested, they would not bring us morally one step nearer to God. Opium, ether, and chloroform are no keys to the kingdom of heaven. Not the narcotized, but the pure in heart, are to see God. Our communion with him must take place through love, through the conscience, through active coöperation with him in bringing in the reign of love or righteousness. Whatever does not attain to this is illusion and delusion. Whatever mysticism we allow must be subject to law for the sake of the intellect, and to righteousness for the sake of the conscience. Only that is divine

138 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

in this matter that helps men spiritually Godward, and makes them more effective in working the work of God upon the earth. This is the one sure distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit and the revelations of chloroform, the contagion of religious crowds, the imaginations of ignorance, and the self-hypnotizations of conceit.

The aberrations on this point of the supernatural in religion have had a very complex root. The deepest source of the error was the false naturalism and false supernaturalism which led to looking for God only in unmediated manifestations outside of the order of natural law. This was complicated with a fear of Pelagianism, leading to extravagant assertions of divine sovereignty and human inability. And in strenuous times this surely led to a high-pressure religion of spiritual struggles and intense emotions. Because of man's inability, everything must be of God ; and because of the false super-

naturalism, God was surely manifested only in unmediated and, so far as the order of life goes, anomalous ways. This necessarily led to excessive introspection and unwholesome subjectivity; and men were set to studying their own subjective symptoms, instead of being taken out of themselves and put upon the objective and positive task of doing God's will in the world and thus bringing in his kingdom. A double evil resulted. First, a great many good men and women of stable nerves and good sense were kept out of all joy and peace in their religious life because of their mistaken expectations; and, secondly, other persons, often of inferior intellect and character but psychologically suggestible, were able to imagine they had the prescribed experiences and were not a little damaged thereby. And these evils are by no means ended yet.

In his work, "The Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 200, Professor Wil-

liam James gives an interesting passage from Jonathan Edwards which shows that Edwards already understood the influence that suggestion, expectation, and imitation often have in moulding experience. Edwards says :—

“A rule received and established by common consent has a very great, though to many persons an insensible influence in forming their notions of the process of their own experience. I know very well how they proceed as to this matter, for I have had frequent opportunities of observing their conduct. Very often their experience at first appears like a confused chaos, but then those parts are selected which bear the nearest resemblance to such particular steps as are insisted on ; and these are dwelt upon in their thoughts and spoken of from time to time, till they grow more and more conspicuous in their view, and other parts which are neglected grow more and more obscure. Thus what they have

experienced is insensibly strained so as to bring it to an exact conformity to the scheme already established in their minds. And it becomes natural also for ministers who have to deal with those who insist upon distinctness and clearness of method, to do so too." — "Treatise on Religious Affections."

Edwards had not the language of modern psychology, but he had recognized the fact of suggestibility and the influence of expectation in the religious field with all clearness. In his works written after the "Great Awakening," one clearly sees a growing conviction on his part that "manifestations" are very uncertain tests of a work of grace. And the only way out of all these confusions is never to aim at "experience," but to aim at righteousness, and find the essential and only sure mark of the divine presence, in a religious sense, in the fruits of the Spirit. And along with the marked and sudden transitions of char-

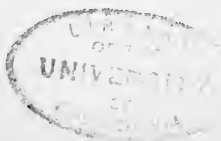
142 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

acter which may occur in mature persons of strenuous type, we must make place for a gradual training of the will under the divine education of life, or for quiet, unreflective growth into the kingdom of heaven. Here too the divine immanence helps us. We are no longer compelled to set nature and grace, the secular and the religious, the human and the divine, in mutually exclusive antithesis; but rather find them in mutual penetration. ✓

If some days were ushered in with a mighty bang, and other days came with the quiet of the dawn, we might conceivably have an astronomical school of bangers and one of anti-bangers; and they might so confine their attention to the bang as to forget that the only point of any real importance is to have the day come, with or without a bang. Compared with this, the bang question is insignificant. We have these schools in religious experience, emphasizing the

bang or the non-bang and overlooking the only matter of importance, — the dawn of the spiritual day.

This false supernaturalism in the inner religious life of the subject has led to corresponding error in determining religious duty. The result has often been an abstract religiosity and other-worldliness, which has sometimes made sad work of the life that now is. Submission to the will of God is indeed the central thing in religion, and its importance cannot be overestimated. Hence religious thought has occupied itself largely with securing this harmony without inquiring what that will is in its positive contents. The result has been a body of determinations, largely negative, and for the rest mainly concerned with the securing of tempers, dispositions, and aspirations supposed to be peculiarly spiritual. When this result is combined with the disastrous separation of the secular from



144 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

the religious, it leads straight toward asceticism and monasticism. In the Protestant bodies it has led to fixing attention too exclusively on sin and salvation, abstractly conceived, as the matters of supreme importance in religion.

Now this may be good as far as it goes, but it certainly does not go very far. To be sure, submission to the divine will must be secured, if it be wanting; but what is that will for men? After man has returned from his willful wanderings, he is only at the beginning, not the end. Now he must begin to work the will of God. As worldliness consists less in what is done than in the spirit of the doing, so religion consists less in what is done than in the spirit of the doing. Both the worldling and the Christian have to do largely the same things. But the worldling loses himself in the outward and sense life, and fails to relate it to any divine meaning and purpose. The Christian, on the other hand, is in the same sense life, but he

✓

relates it to a divine order, and seeks to glorify that life by filling it with courage and devotion. Religion conceived as a specialty, as a matter of prayers and rites and ceremonies, is a minor matter, and one of no great importance ; but religion conceived as a principle which knows no distinction of secular and religious, but pervades all life, and perpetually offers unto God in living sacrifice as its continual spiritual worship the daily round with all its interests and activities sanctified by the filial spirit, — this is the ideal of humanity. So long as we form any lower conception of religion than this, so long will religion be only one interest among many, and life will lack its true unity.

This I conceive to be the deepest aim of Christianity. The forgiveness of sins is essential, but it is only introductory. The forms of worship and the practices of piety are important, but they are only instrumental. They are not the

146 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

thing, and their significance consists entirely in what they help us to. The thing, the central thing, is the recognition ✓ of the divine will in all life, and the loyal, loving effort to make that will prevail in all life : first of all in the hidden life of the spirit, and then in family life, in social life, in political life, in trade, in art, in literature, in every field of human interest and activity. Only thus can religion be saved from unwholesome and baneful subjectivities. Only thus can it gain the healthy objectivity needed to keep it sane and sweet. The religious spirit must ✓ have all fields for its own ; and at the same time we must remember that all that is normal to man and demanded by his life has its place in the divine purpose and its justifying function in the divine training of men. To think otherwise is atheism.

One of the good signs of the religious times is the growing recognition of this fact. We are outgrowing the conception

of religion as a thing of rites and ceremonies, of cloisters and retreats, of holy days and holy places, and are coming to view it as the divine principle for all living, whatever the day or the place or the work. We are coming to deny the distinction between secular and religious work, and to adopt into holy places all the normal and necessary work of the world. All of this is a divine ordinance, and expresses God's will concerning us. Men are tiring of the cloister and the smell of incense. They are tiring equally of the barren inspection of their spiritual states, and of churning up artificial emotions. They need to be taken out of themselves and given some worthy task to perform under some worthy inspiration ; and this they find in the realization of the kingdom of God upon earth, and the doing of his will here under the stars as it is done in heaven. It is under the unconscious influence of these impulses, which are really strivings after God, the present

148 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

God, the immanent God, that men grow dissatisfied with the formal and barren exercises of traditional religion.

The need of the divine help in order to live the life of the spirit is as manifest as it ever was. The sense of a divine presence in our lives is not dying out, but it is taking on a new form in accordance with a more careful psychology and a greater precision of thought. Instead of being something sensuously presentable or emotionally definable, it is rather the assurance of faith and the sense of reality which comes in spiritual living. Along with this has come the insight that it is preëminently in the conscience, the pure heart, the surrendered will, and holy activities that God makes his abode with us. From this we may expect great gain to religion. We shall lay aside our irrational fear of naturalism and also our crude supernaturalism. We shall find God everywhere, not merely in unmedi-

ated and miraculous manifestations, but also in the world he has made, in the laws he has ordained, in the great forms of life and society which he has appointed, and in the multitudinous activities which life necessitates. We shall come into communion with God in prayer and meditation, and also in work of all kinds, as we seek to build up his kingdom in the earth. We shall work more definitely along lines of training, culture, education, the improvement of all the conditions of human life in accordance with the laws of our being, yet without closing the spirit to direct contact with the Divine. In so doing we shall manifest ourselves as wise sons of God, and the divine manifestation will correspond. Indeed, there is no telling what God would do for a community thoroughly bent on doing his will and using all the means of influence in their power. Nature is no closed system, but forever becomes that which God wills it to be.

150 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

Along with a moralized humanity might well go new heavens and a new earth. To them that have shall be given. At this point I more than suspect that I am what Professor James calls himself, "a crass supernaturalist." My "crassitude" is limited, not by any respect for nature as something having metaphysical existence and rights of its own, but solely by the insight into the necessity of an order of experience on which we can depend. Without that, we should be equally at sea in both mind and morals. We must, then, learn the lesson of law and self-help. For some time, at least, the keynote of religious progress must be found, not in vague and illiterate utterances about the supernatural, but rather in the divineness of the natural and the naturalness of the divine. This term supernatural has so many misleading associations, and is still the subject of so many misunderstandings, that we would do well to abandon it altogether and in its place write God ;

and then, in the assured faith that we are in his world and his hands, resolutely set about our Father's business, looking not for signs and wonders, but for the coming of the kingdom of God in the form of higher and holier living.

Thus we see the deep significance of the divine immanence for religious thought. It dispels that great cloud of difficulties, born of crude naturalistic thinking, that haunt popular religion. This is largely a negative service, but it is important nevertheless. It recalls God from the infinite distance in space and time to which sense thought must banish him, and where we so often lose him, and makes him the omnipresent power by which all things exist and on which all things continually depend. This metaphysical presence does not indeed secure spiritual sympathy and fellowship on our part, but it removes the speculative obstacles thereto that exist in many minds.

152 THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

and thus makes room for the spiritual life of communion and sonship. This life itself can be secured only in devout and faithful living by each for himself, but it is something to have the speculative intimidations removed that sometimes, like Bunyan's lions, frighten pilgrims from the way. It is something to know that this world, however mysterious and even sinister in many of its aspects, is after all God's world; that we are not standing helpless and hopeless in the midst of Strauss's "enormous machine" world with its pitiless wheels and thundering hammers, but we are in a personal world, a moral world, where character is being wrought out and a kingdom of righteousness is being set up. In such a world it is permitted to see visions and dream dreams, and devote ourselves to the service of the highest and best, in the sure faith that they are also the truest and most real, the abiding and essential stuff of the universe.

But we also see the necessity of uniting this thought of the divine immanence with the thought of law. All is law ; all is God. All is God ; all is law. We read it either way, according to the emphasis demanded by the times and circumstances. For those who have not learned the lesson of law, who are seeking short cuts, and who are not availing themselves of the natural means of growth and influence, we say, All is law. For those, on the other hand, who have lost God in the law, and who have fallen into the paralyzing notion of a self sufficient mechanism, we say, All is God. In both cases alike we say with the apostle : Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. For in him we live and move and have our being.

The Riverside Press

*Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.
Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.*

LIFE EVERLASTING

By **JOHN FISKE**

"An essay so skillfully written that no reader can misunderstand it, except by wilful preference. It unfolds a process of reasoning by which science is made to show the probability of immortality, and to exhibit it as far less incredible than many natural processes accepted without question."

Boston Transcript.

"The highly condensed matter of Dr. Fiske's work, its luminous argument, and faultless logic immediately commend it to the better class of those seeking for some modern confirmation of Christianity."

New York Times.

16mo, \$1.00 *net.* Postpaid \$1.07

**HOUGHTON,
MIFFLIN
& COMPANY**



**BOSTON
AND
NEW YORK**

IMMORTALITY and the NEW THEODICY

By **GEORGE A. GORDON**

"The question of the immortality of man is considered here from a purely rational basis. The course of thought is ably planned and is worked out with great care, and with the frankest and fullest purpose to apprehend truth and interpret it."

The Congregationalist, Boston.

"We cordially commend this book both for its stimulating and nutritious character, as well as for the choice and vigorous language in which the subject is presented."

The Churchman, New York.

16mo, gilt top, \$1.00

**HOUGHTON,
MIFFLIN
& COMPANY**



**BOSTON
AND
NEW YORK**





THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS
WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN
THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY
WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH
DAY AND TO \$1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY
OVERDUE.

MAY 25 1934

MAY 26 1934

MAY 29 1934

SEP 23 1944

REC.CIRC. SEP 16 1994

APR 04 2002

le a
pso nel

JB 2/991



Bonne

144457

BT124

B6

